UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 00666883 4

80 751

LE GENTLEMAN

5685g

LE GENTLEMAN

AN IDYLL OF THE QUARTER

BY

ETHEL SIDGWICK

AUTHOR OF "PROMISE"



1655.96
3/10/21

LONDON

SIDGWICK & JACKSON LTD.

1911

PR
6037
I35G4

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

First Impression . . . March 1911
Second Impression . . . March 1911

All Rights Reserved

À MON AMIE

M. R.

CETTE ÉTUDE EST DÉDIÉE

I

It was a Sunday morning, in France.

Alexander Fergusson had known many Sunday mornings, but none the least like this. It was so gay, so insidiously exquisite, as to be quite disturbing. He had set out to the Scotch church, and he sat down helplessly in the gardens. Yet he had a triple duty to church: a duty to his conscience, a duty to Meysie's mother, and a duty to Meysie. He had received such stringent directions from Mrs. Lampeter not to leave Meysie too much alone, while he was in Paris to keep an eye upon her. He felt like a well-trained sheep-dog on his native hills, on trial service, with a single frisky lamb in charge. Of course Meysie was too pretty, too innocently conspicuous, to frisk about Paris alone. Yet he had not found her in her room at the pension, and he could but suppose she had gone on to church without waiting for him. Meysie had been well brought up before she took a fancy to painting in Paris; and he knew of old she was apt to get a little impatient of his dutiful and devoted escort.

Alexander, settling on to a seat well-canopied by a flowering tree, only hoped she had not let that fellow Avery take her; but Avery did not look like a churchgoer. He wore loose clothes and soft hats, and spoke French, when he chose, in a manner—to Alexander—most conceited and incomprehensible. What was worse, he spoke to Meysie, and (whether she understood or not) she listened and laughed. Alexander did not like Avery. He had come, with less weighty deliberation than usual, to that conclusion. He frowned, shifted his position on the seat, and tried therewith to shift the current of his thoughts into more agreeable channels.

It was not difficult. This garden of the Luxembourg was marked, on the map he conscientiously studied every morning, as a little dull-green square. Green it certainly was—dull it was not; nor was it small in any permanent sense, for it seemed to shut in its short compass the whole of life; more flowers, more birds, more sunshine, more happy homely people, than he had yet seen in Paris. Alexander had not been in Paris long, and had come well armed with theories. He had passed one year at Oxford, and had rooted out some of his earliest prejudices in the surprising atmosphere of that so-called dreamy city. But a prejudice against foreigners —French foremost, Parisians above all, and Parisian women in particular—had never quite been swept from his Scottish mind. He had

never thought to have to prove his theories, for no natural train of events would have brought him abroad. Even this freak of Meysie's anent the study of art need not have diverted his well-planned course. He was engaged to Meysie: she had succumbed at Christmas-time, in the somewhat sentimental wrench of parting with England and her circle. But he was necessarily detained at Oxford; and it had been settled that when the studios closed, and his term was over, Alexander should join the Lampeters for a summer holiday in Cornwall by the sea, and there take serious account of his lady Meysie and her artistic progress.

Meysie was an only child, and rather delicate; and during her absence abroad her mother fussed momentarily and miserably about her health. Alexander, seeing Mrs. Lampeter occasionally in his rapid sorties from Oxford, installed himself as a son beneath her Kensington roof, entered into all her remarkably varied interests (especially Meysie), and was most tender and encouraging. He never returned to Oxford, however, without a feeling that a telegram might follow, exhorting him to go instantly to Paris and fetch Meysie home. Yet it was but a jesting fancy—and he never thought it was to be his own health that should give occasion for such an expedition.

Alexander, like many of those too confident in their powers of body, had overworked rather seriously during the early spring. He was not a

public-school boy, and he had made his way to Oxford with nothing behind him but his own dogged labour. He was in no " circle " at all in his college. He was, with one or two others of his kind and antecedents, more like the silent grub, far below the current in the river mud, while others darted and whirred on the surface. He worked with all his well-balanced tenacious Scotch brain, and his amusements were most gentle, sentimental, and innocent. One or two of the highest, finest minds with which he came in contact—that of the Master of his college foremost—approved and respected him warmly. Other men looked at him, passed a careless word, and let him go. As for Alexander, he did not need them, for he had evolved an inner society. His daily demands on men and things were small ; he had a strong taste for books, the labouring classes, and animals ; he worshipped, at a most respectful distance, art and women. There was little more to say of Alexander Fergusson at twenty-four, unless one knew him very well : and he was hard to know.

He had been quite ill in March, and in the retirement of the Home he confided in his nurse a little. The nurse and the doctor together urged him to get away, feeling their responsibility towards him, for he refused entirely to let his mother know anything at all of his illness. He deceived her indeed elaborately with the history of an Easter reading-party at Abinger in Surrey,

a place the name of which he discovered by the map. Meanwhile, his new friend nursed him devotedly, and he got slowly better. Oxford was in the heyday of its summer jollities when Alexander emerged on the world rather fagged and pale, and received a letter from Mrs. Lampeter.

Mrs. Lampeter said she really could not stand any longer the diet of scrappy postcards on which she was fed by Meysie—and the last postcard admitted she had a cough—and would Alexander go as soon as term was over, at her expense, and take a prescription, and have a look at her, and tell her to wrap her throat.

Alexander, in a tranquil letter, would go at once—at whose expense not specified, but he hoped well understood ; and he went accordingly in May, with a doctor's order to back him. He avoided society at starting, saw few of his friends, and only the necessary authorities. He interviewed the master of his college, who thought the course was wise—with a long Scotch "r" in "course"—and begged him not to read too much in Paris. He might well have done so, indeed, had he seen the box of books Alexander packed to take with him. He had installed himself in a little room in the Rue du Bac, chosen to be near to Meysie's working studio. He then discovered that she had changed house, and inhabited a pension in the Luxembourg quarter, some way from the studio she daily visited.

This was annoying, for had Alexander known, he would have so placed himself as to escort her to and fro. Now he could only meet her at her exit, and if she were in a good humour, walk with her home to lunch.

She had changed a little, he found: was thinner than ever, surer of herself and her views, and gabbled much of art and artists. She chattered also of her "set," a set which she had attached, or been attached to, somewhat at haphazard. It seemed there were some charming people among them, whose chief charm was to know Mr. Avery. Mr. Avery was very clever *indeed*, a "black and white" of distinction, though only twenty-seven. Alexander had been introduced to some of this "set" on arrival, with a mixture of deprecation and naïve triumph which was all Meysie; and he had seen her air her little theories among them—for Meysie in Kensington was only less "advanced" than her mother—and be forgiven for them because the set found her colouring pretty and her recklessly bad French amusing. Alexander, whose knowledge of French was greater than appeared in his speech, suspected this attitude in the set, and writhed with silent irritation because he was incapable of getting up to defend her. And because Avery was the only Englishman besides himself among them, and must have seen it too, and could have defended her had he wished, Alexander had begun to hate Avery

silently and powerfully during the week, and was inclined now to give rein to his hatred on Sunday.

So he sat on the seat and "girned," until the sun through the chestnut leaves diluted his rancour, and he became by degrees pensive and philosophical. Meysie was young, after all, and a baby in experience. She would be caught naturally by a dragon-fly like Lance Avery, whirring past her in all the lustre of easy success, where she was a tentative beginner. He was not a man to rest on, and Meysie, for all her fine assumption of independence and omniscience, needed a strong arm to turn to. If he, Alexander, just stayed there, she would turn to him again, sweetly as she had done at Christmas. Alexander thought of that Christmas, its new deep-stirring emotions, his glory and gratitude when the incredible happened, and Meysie forgot all her little poses for five minutes, and sat on his knee with her head against his shoulder. That was a thing for a man to remember, and have a moment's doubt of life and Fate! He must have lost his spirit and grip indeed, during the past months of dreary seclusion, to do so.

There was a Frenchwoman on the other end of Alexander's seat, and thinking of his little lady, he had been drawing comparisons idly. He did not care for Frenchwomen on principle, as has been stated. Those he had observed during the week past had not served to correct his

impressions. They had mocking eyes, and an answer pat to everything, even before you had finished speaking. Otherwise stated, they did not seem to consider before they spoke, and yet their speech showed a disconcerting sharpness. Their movements too were controlled and effective; they appeared never to be off the stage. Alexander, regarding them as spectacles, was ready to admire a little nervously: from the point of view of woman purely, he preferred Meysie's gauche impulsiveness.

The Frenchwoman in question was harmlessly occupied for the moment: she was feeding the birds. She had a bit of breadcrumb in a packet attached to her small bag, and she was flinging tiny morsels of it delicately and adroitly to tempt the wrangling sparrows. The spoiled sparrows of the Luxembourg mostly sat waiting for the goods their gods provided, only a degree less fat and stolid than the pigeons that walked languidly among them. Now and again one more adventurous than the rest rose on the wing to catch the crumb, and this feat extracted a strangled cry of joy from the child who stood by the woman's knee, a minute boy with a close-cropped head, wearing a soiled blouse. Alexander continued to think of her as "the woman" until she glanced round, when he discovered she was only a girl, far younger than her dress, pose, or manner had led him to imagine from the side. He did not follow her low remarks to the

child very easily, but all he caught seemed to him to signify possession.

" V'là," said the Frenchwoman finally, dusting her hands with a little clap that scattered the birds in all directions. " It is finished for to-day, Jean. Another day the sparrows will come to our hand—who knows ? Now, off with you for your walk."

" Non, non, non ! " said the child, clinging to her knee.

" Si, si, si. Papa may be coming, and we shall not want you. Besides, there is Meess Nurse who waits down there. Go to Meess Nurse quickly, old boy, before she grows angry."

Her tone was light and dry, rather culpably indifferent, Alexander thought ; for, as they both turned to look down the path, the resemblance was unmistakable between them.

" She is already angry," said the child, gazing towards a fine young woman in English nurse's costume, who was dallying in the distance, her red hair shining in the sun.

" Well, then, you must say it is the fault of me and the sparrows. Can you say that in English ? "

" I think so," said Jean doubtfully. " All but moineaux." He looked up at her, as though for help.

" I have no idea," said the Frenchwoman. " That is, I have forgotten for the moment. I have not my lesson-books with me to-day, seest

thou, because Sunday is a fête. Surely you know, Jean, since you are always feeding them."

Jean shook his head vigorously, still clinging to her with both hands.

"So much the worse for you," said the Frenchwoman. "You will have to ask her again."

"No—I will not." Jean frowned rebellion, and kicked at the gravel.

"Sparrows," said Alexander, as though he could not help it. Then, as both turned, "I beg your pardon," he added, looking very gloomy in his embarrassment.

"Monsieur is amiable," said the Frenchwoman, scanning him. Then in sudden mischief, aside to the child, "I thought I should make him say it."

"Did you know I was English, then?" said Alexander surprised.

"To be sure. Could one doubt?"

"I can spik English," said Jean, coming firmly to the front. "Good-night, sir."

"Good-morning," said Alexander, the dourness of his diffidence melting in a smile. "You have got it upside down, haven't you?" he added mildly.

Jean tried the two expressions alternately, in a low voice, as though giving them a fair trial for precedence. He was frowning the while in his lady-nurse's direction. The young mother, if she was so, looked upon him with a kind of amused detachment.

"See what a funny little boy I have," the look seemed to say; and she glanced at Alexander, perhaps too evidently, for sympathy.

"Now then, run to nurse," she said. "One can see she grows furious, even from here. You will embrace me, eh? What, the hand alone?" She laughed. Jean, having kissed her hand with a little air of business most singular to Alexander's ideas, relinquished his grasp on her skirts, and fled suddenly into the sunshine, to be greeted with a shake from his handsome nurse, and lugged away down the path. The girl or woman crossed her legs, and subsided pensively into her seat.

Now Alexander knew little of children, but this short scene disturbed him. He had not as yet included an elaborate study of Parisian family life in his observations, but he had noted that the parents were at least not oblivious of their nurseries, and that the common British phenomenon of bonne, or nurserymaid, was often wholly dispensed with. This young mother, he could only suppose, was in that haughty world that discards its offspring, leaving it to country-folk and foster-nurses, that the true owner may lose herself the more readily in the pleasures of the town.

Sitting beside, almost behind her, Alexander could think all this very comfortably, his memory seizing on fragments of reading of somewhat ancient date—for he had read very little in

French more modern than Georges Sand—until a slight incident occurred to divert him. His neighbour had shifted her position slightly when the child left her, and she had moved into a sunbeam; far from appearing to suffer by this, however, she made a little movement of luxury, and throwing up her arms, clasped her hands behind her head. There was nothing to object to in the pose, which was graceful, if a little free; but Alexander, from the rear, saw both hands and all her fingers, and she wore no wedding-ring.

At the instant when he made this curious discovery, which seemed to arouse another group of the sleeping memories of fiction, the Frenchwoman turned, as though to look down the path; but she cast Alexander a full, frank, leisurely glance on the way. Unconsciously, almost visibly, the young man drew back: he might have seemed to shrink, had his body been able to express the spiritual sensation. Yet there was nothing dangerous about her, except that she was prettier than he had thought. Her liquid glance was filled to the brim with gaiety, as if her thoughts had been amusing her. Whether he, Alexander, bore any part in those thoughts was of course unproven; yet the fact of her attention suggested it.

Now, in his life, nobody had ever laughed at Alexander. Meysie had mocked him on the surface, it is true, continually; but she had never come near enough for him really to feel her

mockery. She teased him for words and phrases and personal habits, like a child; and though surprising at first, he had found it quite sweet to be teased.

But this young woman's glance spoke more. It was he, Alexander Fergusson all told, that amused her. She had an aspect of classing him, comparing him, fitting him into some memory, pinning him like a specimen: yet all so lightly, so passingly, that he was astonished at the liveliness of his own impression. He had classed her involuntarily, of course; but that was another thing. He had a mind habituated to observation, and a life which had made observation necessary. Observing, he held, could never be wasted time, so long as a thousand stored impressions could distil one fact for his mind. Yet he had, all unconscious, the arrogance of the strong mind which had had to depend on itself for all it had gained in life. He believed in mind supremely, ultimately: and he was used to see more fragile intelligences, which he was yet too kind to disdain, fluttering about him, approaching, rarely recognising, but never piercing his own. He had no expectation—he thought he had no wish—to be fathomed, unless it were by the mother who had nursed and taught him to speak, or by a rare great mind, such as that of his Master, that might deign to bend in passing its searchlight upon him.

And now this Frenchwoman looked at him.

Fortunately she also soon after looked away, and he had leisure to make up his mind to move at once from her perilous neighbourhood. In the act of doing so, she spoke.

" I think you work at the Sorbonne," she said, in excellent English.

" I have been to a few lectures," said Alexander, disturbed.

" I saw you," said the Frenchwoman.

This was awful. She had stared at him before then, possibly in that same manner, and now she was going to claim acquaintance on the strength of it. Alexander could find nothing at all to say. He sat longing to go, and looking extremely unhappy. Whether the Frenchwoman observed this was doubtful, but her disturbing lively eyes were roaming everywhere, and might easily have dropped on him.

" I also have studied there," she explained.

" English, I suppose," said Alexander.

" You find I speak well ? " said she.

" Yes," said Alexander. He then had a sudden vision of the bow and gesture with which a Frenchman would have responded, and he was moved to add, " You must have practised a good deal."

" I lose no opportunity," said the Frenchwoman, " of speaking to English people." And she added thoughtfully, after a pause, " None."

Alexander did not doubt her word, and silence succeeded. To his relief, she seemed to find

something on the path that diverted her attention from himself, and the something soon resolved itself, as indeed he expected, into a man. He was also just the kind of man for which Mr. Fergusson's cautious mind had prepared him: young, elegant, reckless, rather dissipated looking, and he wore his hat inclined to the side. It was painful to reflect that that nice little boy would grow up to be such as he. He was not looking at all in the Frenchwoman's direction; but she put out her umbrella as he passed and stopped him.

"Tiens, Gilberte," said the Frenchman. "So that is where thou art hiding."

"You thought I was at Mass," said the Frenchwoman.

"No, for I met the mioche down there. He has been with you, he told me."

"I do my duty," she said. They were gazing at one another, each with a slight smile. The smile, which was intimate, meant much. Alexander, school himself though he would, could neither move nor disregard them. His mind was full of floating threads, the plots of half-forgotten stories. The child was hers, then, or his—or the unmerited charge of both? What made them smile in that lazy, meaning fashion? Why could he not wash his hands of them and go? No pleasant solution fitted the case, and the pair desired, or should desire, to be alone.

"Ça marche, hein?" said the young man,

after waiting a minute, flicking restlessly with his stick at the stones.

"Comme ça," said the lady, and dropped her eyes. "Paul," she said, with sudden impatience, "you can surely wait a little, for once. We have many things, thou knowest, to be discussed. There is room"—she glanced sidelong—"on the seat."

Such a hint was enough, it seemed, even for an Englishman. Alexander rose at once, and moved into the sun. As he left them, the last thing he heard was a low remark of the man's, and Gilberte's little runnel of laughter. It was a pretty laugh, mirthful, girlish, charming to the ear as was the timbre of her low-pitched voice. It annoyed Alexander that she should own it, and not some woman who would use it in a better cause. He may be excused for such a thought, for it was too evident in this instance that the laugh was at his expense.

An instant after he saw Meysie, and was distracted from such ulterior inquiries.

Miss Lampeter, unmistakable in the distance by her hat and the flutter of her light-green dress, was parting with friends at a turning of the ways. Alexander's keen eye distinguished Lance Avery in the group, and having no wish to meet him, unless it should be necessary, he stopped short. He was still, as he was half-aware, under the raking fire of the Frenchwoman's glance; but in the toil of the garden-paths no other course but

that of masterly inactivity was open to him for the moment.

After a characteristic pause to gather her scarf and her skirt and to straighten the elaborate outline of her hat, Meysie came towards him, stalking along with her finest princess air, for Meysie was tall, straight as a reed, and almost as thin.

"Hullo, Alec," she called in a high voice before she reached him. "Didn't you go to church?"

"I came to fetch you," said Alexander, "and you were not there."

"Ah!" said Meysie. "Somebody else had fetched me first."

She was plainly in an excited impish mood, and without following the hint of his lowered voice, still spoke high and clearly. "You have to be an early bird to catch Me, you know," said Meysie. She had a way in talk of rendering certain words, especially pronouns of the first person, that gave them a value and glow of their own.

"I came at the time I said," said Alexander. He was not offended, only accurate. But his tone was level, and he looked, to Meysie, rather dull.

"Poor old thing," she said teasingly. "The fact is, we don't go to church much, in Our set. Are you shocked?" She had run her arm into his in a kind of patronising protection; quite a new manner, with which Meysie was experimenting, by way of trying its effect. She tried

a hundred manners a month, as she tried a hundred fashions of dress, assuming for a time each new one she came across, but persuaded of the prettiness of so many, that she could never quite reconcile herself to any permanent adoption of a "style."

Alexander was most faithfully fond of her, and bore her changes very well, being even more persuaded than herself as to the charms of each. But he wished, at this particular moment, that she would submit to walk on and to talk lower, for he knew that one of the pair on the seat spoke English, and he was aware, through the intervening branches, that both had dropped their private conversation to attend. Nor did he much wish Meysie to stand within range of that Frenchman's cool mocking eye.

"It's a pity you were not a little earlier," said Meysie carelessly; "then you could have come along. We have been down to his new studio, and it's ripping. All kinds of portraits of people, thumbnail sketches, simply killing. He's frightfully satirical, I tell him."

"Yes, I dare say he is," said Alexander, only thankful that she avoided a name.

"What do you talk so low for?" said Meysie. "Have you got a cold? This is rather a nice little bit," she added thoughtfully, gazing, as luck would have it, straight past the pair on the seat. "I think I shall come out and do it to-morrow afternoon."

"I shall sit alongside and read to you," said Alexander.

"No, you won't," Meysie crushed him. "You'll just stay away. As if I could work with you reading."

"Work" was another word which had gained a glory in utterance of late. Fergusson smiled to hear it. He tried conscientiously to believe in Meysie's work; but since he was never allowed to see her at it, he had some excuse for finding the required attitude towards it difficult. During her working mornings, Meysie was invisible: caught, as it were, to a cloudy sphere apart, into which a mere lover must not presume to penetrate. He bowed to her wishes, and filled the interval of exile in working himself, at home, in the libraries, or, when hours permitted it, at the Sorbonne.

"Come, May," he said to the artist, who was resting both hands on her sunshade, her long neck arched backward, and her eyes narrowed impressively. "You will be very late for lunch."

"Oh," said Meysie, "they're used to me up there. They have all sorts of jokes against me at the pension. They would all be disappointed if I was not late."

"Well, suppose you go one better still," said Alexander, drawing her onwards very quietly and firmly as he spoke.

"And be punctual?" scoffed Meysie. "What

a conventional-minded person you are, Alec, fundamentally."

"Fundamentally, my dear, I'm much otherwise, I'm thinking," said he. "For I was going to suggest your letting them expect, and coming out to dinner with me."

Meysie opened her mouth and turned. Then she swiftly smoothed her features.

"All right," she said. Since he had noticed nothing, it was as well not to betray that it had never occurred to her to go out to dinner on Sunday. The unpalatable fact had to be swallowed, digested, and forgotten as rapidly as possible in her subsequent attitudes, that he, the bourgeois and the Scotchman, should have been the one to propose it.

As for Alexander's attitude, it was not at all complicated. "Fundamentally," he did dislike paying for his Sunday dinner in a shop; but he wanted Meysie's company.

II

It was about a week later than this that Alexander made friends with Gilberte, and it was then, as he might have demonstrated, not his fault. He had espied her once or twice in the streets, round about the Sorbonne, which she seemed to haunt, but he had hitherto avoided a second direct encounter. On the occasion in question she was, when he first discovered her, reading in a warm corner of the gardens, against the wall under the terrace. She looked serious, and he went past, secure that she was too engrossed to notice him. He had a mission to the neighbouring theatre to purchase tickets for two to a play of Racine's, which he had carefully read before so venturing, for the sake of Meysie. So he proceeded steadily towards the Odéon exit, committing himself as he went to a generalisation. French girls had nice dark eyelashes, was what he was saying to himself, glancing sedulously though shyly about him at the couples that passed, in order to make the rule as general as possible. The girl reading by the wall had had—he had happened to notice it. It was

better, on the other hand, to be at the theatre as soon after eleven as possible, for the Parisians would naturally flock to a play of Racine's.

Arriving there, he was a little surprised to hear chiefly other languages than French, in the little crowd pressing to the bureau. He even heard behind him a clear Glasgow accent that made his heart leap up; though being himself an earlier arrival, and acting in the name of justice and Meysie, he firmly refused to allow that young lady to push past him, and claim the last places at three francs. The Glasgow lady tossed her head in consequence, and said "Tourists"; but Alexander emerged triumphant with his tickets.

He made it a rule in Paris to vary the route as much as possible, for one must know one's geography, when conducting girls about the Quartier: even should they, like Meysie, invariably think they know better than he. Man must hold his own by genuine knowledge, was Alexander's idea, not by mere assertion, like a woman. Thus he would naturally have returned to the Rue du Bac by the network of little streets bordering the great church in sight, whose name he had temporarily forgotten. Yet he found himself tamely returning in his steps, and plunging once more into the green gaiety of the Luxembourg.

There were innumerable children about in the open space by the fountain, but he failed to

perceive the disturbing child that he connected with his first meeting with the French girl. She was still sitting solitary, her chair slightly tilted, her head in the shadow of the terrace wall. As Alexander approached, one of a humorous group of young men above dropped a bunch of cherries upon her head. Alexander turned hot with indignation, but Gilberte seemed merely amused. She tossed a saucy glance to the group of students, and taking the cherries off her hat, began to eat them calmly. The incident had disturbed her reading, and as she ate, her absent eyes on the fountain, Alexander, still flushed and uncertain, crossed the line of her vision.

"Tiens," said Gilberte, and let the front legs of her chair subside to the ground. It seemed to be an invitation, and Fergusson, after very slight hesitation, approached. He could have wished the band of students above would have dispersed, but they looked on attentively. He thought it very slightly regrettable that Gilberte should have chosen so public a place for her studies. It was of the nature of his regret for her hat, which nearly eclipsed her, and carried a bunch of brilliant scarlet poppies. For all his regrets, however, he had no power of resisting the assumption in her eyes: and, having raised his hat, he drew a second chair into the shade. "What a beautiful day," said Alexander, for Gilberte was still eating.

She nodded, as though she did not find the subject fruitful. "Pas mal, les cerises," she said, projecting the last cherry-stone neatly, without the aid of her fingers, into a neighbouring bed. "One should not try to eat them before the month of June."

"Why do you then?" said Alexander, still with disapproval. Whether owing to the hat, the cherries, or his own prepared state of mind, he considered her sans-gêne to-day a little overdone.

"Eating is better than nothing," said Gilberte, "when one is bored."

"Is your reading a bore?" said Alexander.

"Assommant," said Gilberte.

"What is it—English?"

"To be sure. It is my lesson-book."

"I am interrupting you," he suggested.

"It is as profitable to converse," said Gilberte, flicking the leaves of her book. "It is poetry."

"Tennyson," said Alexander, venturing a nearer glance. "Do you like his poetry?"

"Comme ça," said Gilberte. "I like no poetry much, except de Musset, and your Byron. But for this King Arthur, we have to study him, tant pis."

"King Arthur especially?" said Fergusson.

"Especially. He is one of your 'gentlemen,' eh?"

"King Arthur a gentleman? Oh—I don't know."

"I do," said Gilberte, with perfect decision. "He is the complete gentleman of England. And he is assommant; it is I who tell you so."

She then explained, he listening rather alarmed, the exhaustive study of this subject she had undertaken for her examination. She told him exactly what the gentleman was, in the completest detail; she defined pitilessly his limitations; she demonstrated the working of his brain, heart and limbs on public and private occasions; she illustrated him from English literature with a careless ease that proved the expert.

Alexander said little, poking at the path with his stick, betraying only by his almost sourly impassive face how all his inner man shrank from this subject of conversation. He had to reply now and then, and he replied at random, and only succeeded in spurring her.

"You are a gentleman, hein?" said Gilberte, with an aspect of sweet innocence, finding herself unable to prod his increasing reticence in any other fashion. Fergusson awoke with half a start.

"They wouldn't tell you so at Balliol," he said, with a savour of grimness.

"Where is Balliol?"

"Where I should be at this moment; in an English university."

"You are of an English university?" She stared frankly a second. "But you know others at the university of Balliol that are that, perhaps?"

"Oh, I dare say. You don't go round telling them so, without provocation." He smiled again, still with that touch of Northern irony, thinking of his range of acquaintance. "Those pretty things are out of date a little," he explained, seeing her puzzled; "like the crinoline petticoats."

"You like that—the crinoline?" said Gilberte, diverted instantly. She called his attention, with a Frenchwoman's gesture, to one of the extremely opposite skirts of the period, drawn in to the knees, which happened to be passing. "We are more modest nowadays, eh?" she said, biting at the stalk of a cherry.

"Modest?" said Alexander; then, as she laughed, "I hate to see women look like fools," he said, almost angrily, flipping a stone on the gravel path away with his fingers.

"Do you?" said Gilberte, giving him her full frank glance once more. "I thought men were amused, generally. Paul is amused. Paul calls them 'De grâce, cut the string.' He says that is the expression on the faces of those he meets."

There ensued a pause.

"Who is Paul?" said Fergusson, with careful carelessness.

"Did you not see him? But surely——" She gave up trying to recollect. "Paul is my brother. He is a student of medicine."

Alexander had no comment, and seemed to be arranging his thoughts, so she proceeded—

"Paul is very clever, but he will not work. He has too many friends, and they do bêtises together. The Ecole de Médecine is like that. It is their duty, according to them, do you see, to protest in making a noise."

"What do they protest against?" said Alexander.

"One cannot be sure," said Gilberte. "There is always something. When you pass that way at night you hear them shouting. And Paul is always there." She seemed slightly proud of her dutiful brother.

"He is not married, I suppose," said Alexander.

"Paul—married?" She went off into a fit of delightful laughter. "My faith, that would be convenient to him, a wife, with the life he leads! Why should he be married?"

"I ask your pardon," said Alexander stiffly. "I made a mistake. I supposed—that little boy——"

"Jean? Ah, to be sure. He is my married sister's child. She is dead, my sister Jeanne."

"I beg your pardon," said Alexander, more confused than ever. "There was a resemblance, and so I thought——" He broke off paralysed. Who could say what he had thought, or had not thought? He hardly knew himself.

"You think him like Paul," said Gilberte

tranquilly. "Truly, yes, he is more of our side. He is not like his father, my little Jean."

"You are fond of children," said Alexander, for the sake of saying something, in his whirl of self-reproach.

"Bah, who is not?" Her eyes roamed abroad a minute, half impatient, half tender. "One is fond of them, like the flowers, I think," she said. "One must be, there are so many."

"That's pretty," the Scotchman repeated to himself, unable to say it aloud. "Why does she not always talk like that?" He looked restlessly sidelong at her face, under that eclipsing hat with the scarlet flowers. A bend of the hat hid all but her little nose and chin, and the tender lower curve of her eye. Alexander felt he hated hats. He waited anxiously for her to speak again.

"Jean often plays in the park," she said, "for they live not far from here."

"They do not live with you, then, your sister's family?"

"With *me*?" She glanced at him sidelong.

"I expect my ideas are all wrong," said Fergusson frankly. "I had a notion you were patriarchal over here: all the family branches under one roof."

"Ah yes," said Gilberte. "But *we* are not like that. My beau-frère is well off, and my father is poor. He would not live even in my father's quarter; it is too far from his business."

She paused. "But he has a good heart, André. He comes once in the month to see my mother with Jean, and brings her things. Occasionally he takes her advice, but not about the English nurse. Ah, that English nurse, how we dislike her! And she is severe with Jean, the pauvre petit. He may not play with all the other children, he who is so alone. So, since I live more at hand, I come often to the gardens to watch for them, so that I can tell my mother how things are going with Jean. If André would let her have Jean," exclaimed Gilberte. "But he will not, and mother is too gentle."

Fergusson had been listening with conscientious intentness. He had not even leisure to be surprised at the interest he felt in the French girl's family circumstances.

"So you do not live at home?" he said.

"Not now," said Gilberte. She waited, and coloured very slightly. "Pouf, it is a long story," she said. "Am I then to tell you? My father and I do not agree. My father is difficult, and Paul also fought with him. But Paul is a man, and very clever, and he can get away. He has a little money also, and so he went off to his studies and his friends. But for me, I am a girl. There is a difference."

She paused, the line of her young mouth rather hard.

"My father has his idea," she went on. "A young girl lives at home in virtue, or else she

marries. Jeanne married, and my father loved Jeanne."

"Did you not love her?" said Alexander.

"Oh yes, comme ça. She was much older than I, and she was gentle, like my mother. Paul and I are not gentle, we are rebels. Paul can spend that spirit marching and shouting with the students. I must let mine boil within me, and say nothing, say nothing—eh?"

He saw her little teeth through her parted lips.

"Well?" said Alexander.

"Well?" mocked Gilberte. "So I was to marry André."

"What?" ejaculated the Scotchman. His chair scraped on the gravel as he recoiled.

"To be sure—do you not see? Jeanne died, the kind dear thing, and left for me her place. She was always unselfish, Jeanne."

"But—but—the man—the husband?"

"André? Oh, he has a good heart. He told my mother often he has seen no daughters educated like hers."

"Educated?"

"To make a man happy, bien entendu. Jeanne made him happy, and he has never been quite happy since. He has endless 'tracas' with the servants. Oh, he would have me gladly, André—it is not for him I fear. And he is very well off," Gilberte added dreamily.

"But—good heavens!" Alexander was catching wildly at floating fragments of the castle of

romance she was so ruthlessly beating down. "*You* do not wish it, do you?"

"There is Jean," said Gilberte, and paused. "No, I do not wish it always—only sometimes, for peace. When my father speaks of it, I wish the contrary. It was to my father I said that I intended to study English, and take the Certificate. It made him so furious that I repeated it, so that I soon found it was what I really wanted. They spoke always of Paul's cleverness," said Gilberte, "and I have often thought I am quite as clever as Paul. Because I can cook a dinner well, is that a reason why I should not be received in the Certificate? It is the more reason, I think."

"So do I," said Fergusson warmly. "Why should women waste their minds for ever on little things?"

"Psst!" said Gilberte. "You do not really think your dinner a little thing. However, that is just what I said to my father, and it made him angry—oh, furious. He would not give me money for the classes. He shut up his purse and his face, and looked very ugly. Well then, I should work, and earn some. So between us, mother and I, we found enough, and I began. She is so good, my mother! It was she, finally, who spoke of it to André."

"To André?"

"Yes. You see, she saw it was too much, the way I rose early, and tried to read in the noise my father made about the place, and wasted

time getting to and from Montmartre. So she spoke of it one day to André."

"And what happened?"

"Oh, he was amused, André. And he gave me the money to take a little room, down here. So I have my little room, and work here in peace."

She was silent: satisfied completely, as it seemed, with this result, and the way in which it was attained.

"Why was he amused?" said Alexander resentfully.

"Why? I do not know. He amuses himself easily, André, for he lives well."

"Do you like him?" said Alexander.

"Comme ça," said Gilberte, with her favourite expression. "He has no conversation, and I am fond of talking. He is old also, and fat," she added carelessly. "He does not at all expect I shall get through that examination. Then he will have me, he thinks."

She smiled to herself, a little easy-bitter smile, that meant such knowledge, such tolerance, so much life in such short years, that any young man would have raged to see it.

"Well, I am going," said Alexander. He had a disgusted expression, but he did not move. He was bursting with things he longed to say, and could not, for prudence', for decency's sake. He had stopped too long beside her, too, in this public place, where so many people passed. Even the idle group of men above had got tired

of watching and jesting about them, and had moved on to find a quarrel and a laugh elsewhere. He, Alexander, had better go about his business, and be getting to Meysie Lampeter. There were those tickets, too. He felt in his pocket.

"You have not paid for your chair," said Gilberte, who had been shooting him amused little glances. "Go quickly; I see her approaching." *She* was the dragon-guardian of the seats.

Alexander sat like a rock. If there were chairs to pay for, he was there to do it. Sooner than that she should put a finger into that shabby little bag on her knee——

Gilberte did not do so. She was still biting the cherry-stalk with which she had never ceased to play when the chair-woman came up, and Alexander paid for two. As he was about to fling away the tickets, she held out her hand.

"I remain here an hour," she said, "and may return this evening. That will serve me for all the rest of the day."

He put it into her hand, and her fingers closed upon it, brushing his. "I thank you," said Gilberte, and snipped it into the little bag.

Alexander rose to his feet. "I suppose," he said, in a voice as unsteady as his movement, "you would not care to go to the theatre this evening."

"How?" said the girl, surprised.

"I have—shall have—I mean, I can get two tickets."

Gilberte watched him. Indeed, he was easily at her mercy.

"You—have got two tickets," she observed in her sweet little over-clear accent. "Do you think I did not see you lately pass to the Odéon? It was not for me, monsieur, that you hurried to the bureau."

He did not know where to look. He said helplessly—the wrong thing.

"She won't want it, perhaps. I—I mean, she is often busy."

"Ah—and if la petite Guinevere refuses, I have the second place."

"Why do you call her that?" said Alexander quickly.

"Why? She has the hair for it, and that light green dress. I thought of it at once when I saw her that Sunday. That is all."

Her dark eyes dwelt upon him. Surely she was years older than Meysie, he was thinking. He drew a long breath, facing her.

"Well, I beg your pardon," he said. "That's about all I can do."

"And I thank you," said Gilberte. "That is about all I can do, is it not? We arrange ourselves like that? Good. Adieu, monsieur le gentleman."

As he turned about to go he heard her last sentence—

"Permit me to thank you also for the lesson," said Gilberte.

The lesson! So that was how this absorbing and momentous conversation appeared in her eyes! She had merely practised her English, while he had been spending his sympathy and coming near to lose his head.

Frenchwomen were even more dangerously incomprehensible than Alexander had thought. He strode away with bent head, choosing among the paths at random, and feeling for his saner thoughts and habitual point of view.

III

MEYSIE did not very much want to go to the theatre, as it turned out. Theatres were so hot, and she had a headache, and she had seen that piece once and had been "rasée"; also there were a number of things more amusing and "chic" than the Odéon.

Alexander gravely pointed out that she had wished to go the preceding evening; and Meysie said, well, she had changed her mind to-day and he ought to have asked again. She always seemed to regard this vacillating habit of hers complacently—as a characteristic worthy of attention and study, while Alexander sometimes asked himself seriously whether it did not betray some slight defect of character. However, he studied it dutifully, and telling Meysie the tickets were hers, begged her to offer them instantly to any deserving pair of people she chose in the pension.

"I'm sure I shan't," said Meysie. "How do you know I may not change my mind at dinner and want them myself? Besides, they are yours."

" I bought them for you," said Alexander.

" You didn't," argued Meysie. " You bought one for me. The other is your own."

" Well, I am yours," said Alexander; " so my ticket is. It comes to the same thing."

" How silly you are, Alec," said Meysie, flushing faintly—a lovely little shell colour on her thin cheek. " Oh well, we'll go if you like. What seats are they ? "

Alexander told her, and saw her put up her lip. His seats were in the front row of the cheap places. Meysie, calling herself democrat, reformer, and what not, did not really care to be among the people. He had noted it more than once, as he noted carefully all things in her; but it only gently amused him. It was a charming inconsistency. Fortunately, Alexander, however much amused, rarely smiled.

" The next seats were all gone," he said, " and I couldn't afford the dearest."

" Oh, it isn't that," said Meysie. " Only the students in the gallery are so noisy, and my head aches. We had a horrid stuffy morning at the studio."

Alexander was concerned. " Couldn't you open the window ? " he said.

" Of course not. They must have it hot, for the model."

She glanced at him, expecting him to ask why, but he did not. Alexander was trying in many ways. He often discounted by anticipation

Meysie's little points. He was devoted and careful of her, but she found it hard to take the lead, even with the new and profound experience of her student life.

"Come out a little," he suggested. "A bit of a walk will freshen you, and there are plenty of things still to show me."

"Aren't you tired of sight-seeing yet?" said Meysie.

"Oh," he said, "I have a general idea; but there's plenty to fill in."

Meysie, while she manipulated her hat at the mirror, suggested one or two things her superior experience considered necessary. But Alexander had seen them all. This again was just like him. He had not only made on his own account, during the morning hours while she was at the studio, the round of the classical museums and buildings, but he had ferreted out for himself, in his maps and guides, a variety of the choicer little spectacles that Meysie had never discovered, or had only discovered by happy chance.

"Pictures are so tiring," said Meysie, as she adjusted the lines of her scarf, with her head on one side and an eye screwed up. "I mean, if one goes into them properly, of course. I might take you to the impressionists—I mean Heilbronn's private collection. I know him a little."

"Do you?" said Alexander, with respect. "Well, let's go. I should uncommonly like to see them again."

"Again?" said Meysie.

"He shows them to the public once a month, my book says, if you get a card. So I tried, the day you went to Longchamps. They are fine."

"Oh," said Meysie. "Well, I'm rather glad you have done them, because I know them by heart. Besides, his house is such a stuffy little place."

"Rather," said Alexander. "We had far better stop outside to-day. It's a nice day."

So it was, to a Scotchman's mind. It was a day of well-packed grey clouds, out of which a soft billowing wind playfully scattered drops at intervals. It flapped Meysie's large hat, and caught her thin green skirts, wrapping them about her in an impeding manner, which made her catch at them continually with an irritable hand. Alexander saved her scarf adroitly as they emerged into the Boulevard.

"I will hold it," he said. "You look after the hat."

She did so, pouting, proceeding down the crowded way with long rather agitated strides. Passers smiled at the little Englishwoman once or twice, but, perhaps owing to the presence of Fergusson, she was not directly addressed.

"Don't attend to them," she said once, with a superior smile, when he frowned at an observation he overheard. "One's quite used to remarks in the Quartier."

"You don't come up here often, I suppose," said Alexander.

"Here? Of course I do. I've been to Cluny dozens of times, and Mrs. Wheeler has friends on the island."

"You come with her, then," said Alexander. The American lady referred to was to his mind the most respectable of Meysie's circle at the pension.

"Not always," said Meysie, tossing her head. "You seem to think me very helpless. Agatha Wheeler goes everywhere alone the days her mother is in bed."

"Is that often?" said Alexander.

"About every other day," said Meysie carelessly. "She has something wrong with her, and has tried all sorts of treatments. Mrs. Wheeler simply loves to talk about her treatments. We first got to be friends over vegetarianism."

"Really?" said Alexander, following her divagations heedfully. "Don't you eat meat, then, Meysie?"

"No; that is, hardly ever. When Mrs. Wheeler gets on to the subject of Chicago, I feel I can never think of looking at a chop again. Besides, the meat is shocking at the pension," Meysie added.

Alexander seemed to prick his ears watchfully at this information, though he was so engaged in guiding her across the crowded quays that he

said nothing. When they were on the bridge he said—

" What do you pay ? "

" For my room ? Fifty francs a week."

" Fifty francs ? and they give you bad meat ? "

" Oh, it isn't bad," said Meysie. " Don't be Scotch, Alexander."

" Was I being Scotch ? "

" Yes. It's Scotch to hold me to my word, and Scotch to mind about a franc or two. Mlle. Pion is not a skinflint. When I said I absolutely had to come to the pension because Mrs. Wheeler was so épatant, Mademoiselle turned out of her own room to make room for me, so of course she put the price up. Father gives me heaps of money, anyhow. He is quite an old pet about it."

" I hope you will never have to mind about a franc or two," said Alexander, but he said it to himself. The sentiments he felt most he rarely voiced aloud, especially to Meysie. He had learnt to be careful of what he said to her, for she had odd shy little spasms, turning her back on him, so to speak, or darting away, when he brought out for her inspection his deeper thoughts and convictions. He had found that he must choose the minute to do so.

Meantime he was guiding her imperceptibly to a favourite corner of his, where the trees cluster on the little " place " behind Notre-Dame. It was a spot he had found favourable to meditation,

always sheltered and quiet, where the birds fluttered down to drink at the little Gothic fountain, and the eyes, tempted upward to the soaring pinnacles, found something of the strength and rest he found in his beautiful Oxford. He sat down now at such an angle as to catch their beauty, while Meysie posed herself carelessly alongside, and admired the buckle of her shoe.

"That's the Morgue, isn't it?" said Meysie, who had long since "done" and finished Notre-Dame.

"Yes," said Alexander gravely.

"Pity we can't go in and see the bodies," said Meysie, who wanted to stir him. His gravity and silence always made her mischievous. "That's where my friends live down there."

"In the Morgue?" said Alexander.

"No, silly. On the next island down the river."

"Up," said Alexander. "I beg your pardon, Meysie. On St. Louis, you say? I haven't seen it yet. What friends are those?"

"Oh, Mr. Avery and his lot." She found, to her satisfaction, that she had stirred him. "He's got a room with such a view; you ought to see it."

"You have visited him?" said Alexander, changing colour. "Alone?"

"Of course I have. At least, Mrs. Wheeler came with me once or twice, but I have been

alone as well." She spoke with elaborate indifference. " He's painting me," she added.

" What ? "

" Well, drawing. He's doing a croquis, but he may make a picture of it. I should like to be in the Salon next year," said Meysie.

" Did he make the offer," said Alexander, controlling himself, " or you ? "

" Oh, he asked me if I would sit, and I was rather flattered. The colourists like my hair, you know."

" I thought you said he was black and white."

" He's everything," said Meysie, her eyes glowing. " Black and white's his métier, of course—but his heart's in oil. His brushwork," the enthusiast added, " is wonderful."

" Nearly as wonderful as his impudence," said Alexander, not aloud. He sat silent, conning a hundred things, and wondering which of them he had better say. The majesty of the pinnacles was no longer within range of his inner vision. Meysie shot him little sidelong glances, and preened her plumage in gratification. She had stirred him deeply, and impressed him too. She had proved her independence of Alec and of everybody. She had had horrible qualms before she went to visit Lance that morning when Agatha Wheeler refused to go with her ; and she had done it largely because the American girl could not believe that she would. Meysie had gone one better than the Americans, whose free

ways she admired so much. And Lance had been a perfect gentleman, receiving her as a matter of course, and talking delightfully, in a manner almost to dispose of her doubts. She could only have wished a French friend of his had not come in, just before she left the studio. But for that, it would have been an adventure of which to boast to all.

Meysie's whole waking thoughts were innocently and largely occupied with herself. She conducted an inner history, somewhat conventionally romantic in incident, of which she was sole heroine. To the chosen hero (there were several) of this romance, Fergusson had little resemblance. Avery, though not exactly this pampered ideal, had infinitely more points in common with him than Alexander. Lance had indeed, at first sight, been what Meysie privately called a "revelation." He had taken her breath, his personal likeness to somebody in the history had been so startling. As she came to know him better, and heard him chatter inanities, and saw him eat and yawn, and boast and grumble, just like other people, his halo had faded slightly; but he still wore the romantic charm of the unknown, representing in himself the spirit of that still-new world of art, into which (as she knew in her heart) she had floundered somewhat too heedlessly. Meysie had been feeling rather lost in it, when this very human star appeared to guide her steps. Art in the

abstract she could not grasp, but a flesh-and-blood artist, who was also a celebrity, was very much more within her range of comprehension. She embodied promptly in him all her vague little ideals and tentative theories, and found she grasped the whole as she had never done before. All her relief and delight at this she threw into the balance of the happy Lance's attraction; and for some weeks now he had been occupying almost as large a share of her childish thoughts as the hero had done aforetime.

She had not been the least conscious of inconstancy in so doing. She was, of course, to marry Alexander—some time, when her mother had got used to the thought of it, and when Alec and her daddy had arranged enough money between them to get her a house. Alexander was a good old thing. He was really very clever too, though not conspicuous, and enormously useful; for Meysie could turn him to anything, knowing that, sooner or later, and in the best way possible, he would "see to it." He had "seen to" her mother, while she enjoyed herself abroad; and his own coming, though it might have been better timed, was far preferable to her mother's coming for the moment. It was Meysie's first holiday from the exquisite tyranny of love that had made her life; and she had an indefinable sense that unless she plunged now, the luxury of those shivers and that shock might never again be hers. Much later, when the experience was

over, she would talk to her mother, and kiss her well, and perhaps cry a little, and things would be right again.

Meanwhile, Alexander scanned the intricate fretwork of the cathedral absently, and debated as to his duty. Duty, in the case of a young and delicate girl, became an awfully ticklish thing. Personally he wanted to go instantly and challenge Avery, but that was folly, of course. He must think it out quickly, and what was worse, he must say something.

"Does Avery live alone?" he said finally, striving bravely towards facts in the whirl of his vague resentment.

"The studio's his," said Meysie, delighted to give information, and prove intimacy by the way. "It's an extra studio for what he calls holiday work. He changed rooms with another man, French, called Morny, because he had the better light. Morny is only a common medical student, so the back room did for him quite well, Mr. Avery said. He doesn't care for him particularly; still, they are a sort of friends, because he thinks it's the decent thing to let Mr. Morny come in from time to time, since it used once to be his room." Meysie stopped, and, to her great annoyance, blushed. Alexander caught the fact in a flash, and his heart yearned over her.

"I hope this French fellow was not rude to you," he said.

"No," said Meysie, falling into the trap. "Why should he be?"

"I hear the medical students are apt to be a rough lot, that's all. Have you another sitting?"

"At least two more. I am going to-morrow," she added hastily.

"With Mrs. Wheeler?"

"No."

"Good," said Alexander. "I'll come then, if you will let me. I want to see that portrait."

"You don't," said Meysie in a flash. "You hate it, and him. Don't be such a humbug, Alexander."

"I've done it badly," Alexander thought. "I can't have you going with nobody," he said, with an awkward attempt at raillery. "Let me come along, May. Just as a sort of brother: I don't stand on any other right. I'll hold my tongue if you talk art. I won't make a fool of myself."

"You will," said Meysie, "just by coming; and you'll make a fool of me too, which is worse. Why can't you let me exercise my own judgment for once? I know quite as much about those things as you do. More, because I know the customs here, and you have only got stiff old stodgy English views."

Alexander dared not tell her that she knew nothing at all about "those things"; and that he had the wide knowledge of a self-made man,

five years her senior. But he did not lose courage in the face of this absurd quandary. She was only a child, he repeated to himself, wrestling with his irritation—with the other part of his reasonable self that was crying, "She ought to know more about those things—she *ought*; and she ought, in the commonest justice, to have more feeling for me."

"I am here to represent England," he said, "and the views your mother holds. Every country has got its habits—granted. But Avery's neither one thing nor the other. Looked at in the most generous light," the dour Alexander gritted his teeth, "he's done this thing out of ignorance. If he was fair-square English—and had sisters——"

"Oh, really, what next?" cried Meysie. "You can't know how commonplace you are being, Alec. You have not an idea of the modern point of view. Agatha's mother lets her invite any man she likes, and see him alone——"

"Agatha's mother's not yours," said Fergusson. "And you're not Agatha."

"What do you mean by that?" said Meysie, bristling up. He pushed on unheeding.

"And having a man to see you is not visiting him in his room. Surely you must have the sense to see——" He was growing impatient.

"It's your sense that's aberrating," said Meysie, seizing the first long word that came to be dignified. "Really, I'd no notion you were

so behindhand. I suppose being here has opened my eyes."

"My dear child, open them a little wider. You're looking at yourself—and perhaps me, because you're angry with me naturally. Look at your mother."

But Meysie's cheek was deeper than that shell-pink with passion. She knew she was wrong, and she was furious with him for showing it her.

"Don't trouble to get up," she said, twitching the scarf-fringe from him which he was still absently holding. "I am going home. I have really had enough lecture-reading for one afternoon, even from the winner of the what's-its-name prize. Since you are so *particular*, I'll write to-night and tell mother all about Lance, and you shall see the letter. I shall tell her the truth—and I hope you'll like it."

With this masterly thrust she was off and away, very straight and stately, her fringed scarf fluttering behind her. Alexander waited a minute, wearing the slight smile that violent opposition only could tempt out of him; then he followed, dogging her deliberately. Come what would, she was his charge, and she was not going along that crowded way untended. He kept her in sight up the long hill, but never overtook her, for he did not want to offend her without need. Again he caught many smiles from those who passed her, and his heart was filled with a kind of pitying rage. What if she was young

and awkward, and her pretty hair tricked out a little too evidently to catch attention? What if she did choose to dress in Paris as she would have done in Kensington? She was a girl and innocent, and they had no right to laugh at her.

He spent some frowns as he went, besides that single smile, over his own position. Alexander did not like himself in the character of the bull in the china shop, but he could discover no one better qualified to fill the part of mentor to the wayward girl. As the fruit of gentle investigation on the subject, he had gathered the fact that, both in England and here, she was curiously destitute of women friends. He had already been informed by Mrs. Lampeter that Meysie had quarrelled with the former schoolmate whose rooms she had shared at first in Paris, owing to a difference they had had over some epoch-making subject. Now there seemed to be nobody left in her immediate proximity but the American girl, whose attitude was rather aloof and critical, and Mrs. Wheeler, who, in spite of a fortunate understanding on vegetarianism, was already visibly melting from the pedestal she had at first occupied in Meysie's estimation.

Alexander thought of Gilberte in the garden, and pondered whether in any circumstances it could be possible or desirable to introduce Gilberte to Meysie, and ask her to look after her a little. The truths he had tried to say so awkwardly would surely come better from a

girl of her own age. Besides, he himself would be so much better able to explain things to the French girl than to the American lady : he could not say why, he was only sure of it. There was something in Gilberte's glance that spoke of honour, the higher finer honour which he prized, with which he felt at home. He had almost enjoyed her sword-thrust in that snub, he felt so intimately that it came from a comrade of his mind. She had not been able to humiliate him, only to repulse : and he found himself, in spite of all his inner arguments, in spite of that " adieu " she had given him, with hope for the friendship.

He called that evening at the pension towards seven o'clock, and found Mrs. Wheeler in the hall. She had a sympathetic smile ready for him, but she shook her head. She had put Miss Lampeter to bed with such a headache : she was sure she had given up all thought of going out. She was real sorry to disappoint him, but she knew what headaches were.

Alexander expressed regret. " I wonder if you and Miss Wheeler would care to——" He held out two green tickets modestly. " They're high up, but good places."

" Well, it really was good in him, and Mrs. Wheeler would see. Agatha would go anyway, she was sure. Agatha was just devoted to Racine."

Alexander wondered whether he ought to offer to take Agatha. Her mother, holding the tickets, seemed to be waiting, as though quite prepared for him to demand her daughter on the spot. But he did not; he only bowed, murmured that he was very happy (which he was not), and withdrew.

"I really could not hand it to three girls in one day," he said to himself without, his deeply buried humorous sense faintly tickled by the incident.

It had been altogether a day of problems new to Alexander, and he walked home, setting his impressions carefully in order. He went boldly by a network of small streets to the Rue du Bac, and in spite of thinking without cessation, he did not lose his way.

IV

ALEXANDER came to the conclusion that the only thing for him to do was to know Avery. It was no good judging a man on half an hour's general conversation, and he might as well see what he was worth before he condescended to regard him seriously as a rival.

He met him the next morning, most unexpectedly, in the Jardin des Plantes. Alexander, having called to inquire after Meysie's headache, and having been told she was better, but not up, thought over the fringe of things he had not seen in that neighbourhood, and remembered the old garden by the river. Arriving there, he walked round it slowly, taking in the Latin names of the plants, and the hardly more familiar French names of the animals in their cages. He did not throw crusts at the camels, or poke the bears with his stick, but he watched them with a friendly eye, and pondered to what extent they were able to realise the poverty and absurdity of their surroundings. He imagined the camels looked contemptuous and the lions satirical; but the bears had a roguish aspect, and he liked the

bears. So, apparently, did a minute boy with a close-cropped head, who was leaning with his nose between the railings, and talking to them low-toned.

Alexander approached furtively to overhear his conversation, but as the small boy spoke French, it was difficult to follow. He had a crescent-roll in his outstretched hand, and seemed to be inviting the smaller of the bears to climb and get it, and reminding it gently of a former occasion on which it had been kind enough to do so. His exhortations, in an infant dialect of the foreign tongue, entertained Alexander. Between whiles he snapped himself at the roll, withdrawing it for the purpose through the bars ; and every time it was extended the crescent was somewhat shorter than before.

" Jetez-eux," suggested Alexander laboriously.

The small boy turned to regard him, and he discovered it was the debatable Jean, whom he had seen his first Sunday with Gilberte.

" Que je le lance ? " he inquired doubtfully, nibbling it again. " Non, non ; pas encore." He shook his head with lengthy gravity, his round eyes on Alexander. Jean was not pretty, being somewhat like a small monkey to look at ; but he had sensible eyes, better spaced and set than the monkey's, and as he stared, Fergusson saw that indefinable likeness to his aunt very apparently.

" What is your name ? " he asked, making a

better attempt at the idiom before this five-year-old expert.

" Jean-François Ledru." Having nibbled a little more, still intently regarding him, Jean-François gave a rapid sigh, and turned back to the bears. The stranger had evidently been exhausted as a subject of diversion from them.

" Jean ! " called a strong woman's voice behind. " Where's he got to now, the little nuisance ? Just come here this minute when I call you."

" Bears," said Jean rather piteously, clinging to the railings. Both question and answer were in English, as Alexander noticed without turning round.

" Let him be," said another English voice, a man's. " We can take another turn before you go."

" It's ever so late," said the woman, " with these confounded early meals, and all the way we have to go. We must be off, really. Jean, come and say good-bye ; do you hear me ? "

The child, an eye to the last on the little black bear, turned away. Alexander turned too, certain of the two people he would see, and he was right. The figure strolling beside Jean's red-haired nurse was that of Avery, looking exquisitely neat and smart, in his grey suit and carelessly worn felt hat, his sketch-book under his arm.

" Why, never," smiled Avery. " Who would

have thought to meet here? How are you, Fergusson?"

He advanced with the pleasantest possible air, stretching a couple of fingers. The red-haired nurse pouted and turned away, pushing a little cart before her.

"Wonderful hair that girl's got, eh?" said Avery, with a glance in her direction. "Colouring altogether—nothing like Englishwomen for that. And where is Miss Lampeter this morning? At the studio?"

"At home," said Fergusson. "She's not so well to-day."

"Sorry for that," said Lance easily. "You know, it's my idea she's too thin for her—— Hullo, what's this?"

Jean was standing before him, firmly extending a small dirty hand.

"Good-bye—sir," said Jean in English.

"Good-bye, sir," said Avery, removing his hat with a mocking gesture, and adding in his fluent French, "I shall be sketching here to-morrow in the same place, so mind you come again."

"Yes," said Jean. "If—if she wants to, we will."

"She will want to," said Avery, still mockingly. "Get along now after her, or you'll catch it."

Jean, after a sidelong glance of affection to the bears, and an odd little doubtful look to

Alexander, turned and ran after his nurse, who had swung about with a scowl.

"Bound to have a temper, those red-complexioned people," said Avery. "She leads that child a life, I'll be bound."

"Is she unkind?" said Alexander, thinking of Gilberte.

"Couldn't say: in private, perhaps. She has got a good berth, and things all her own way. A rich man and a widower, and only the one child to look after."

"You have been talking to her," said Alexander, hardly knowing if he were disgusted or not. The man's air was so carelessly candid, and his keen eyes, taking in things near and far while he talked, looked so intelligent.

"Kid came to look over my drawing—background for a character-study I have to do for the journal. She came up to lug him away, and I suppose made out I was English. She found herself in need of a confidant, so we got talking."

He opened his book, and showed Alexander a sketch, enormously clever, of the red-haired nurse's head.

"Ruby Grimshaw she's called, and her uncle by marriage is in the Church, and she's undervalued in England, and all alone in Paris. She hates France, and despises, I am assured, her employer."

Avery was strapping up the book, though his companion would fain have seen further.

"She's jealous, though," he added as he did so. "There's another woman on the scene, trying to catch the master, and there's nothing bad enough she can say about her. Nothing like women for really black insinuations; I believe she was aching to talk to somebody to get them said. Now, I'll bet you anything you like, Fergusson," said Avery whimsically, "that the other woman's dark. What do you say?"

"We have no means of finding out," said Alexander, smiling.

"Oh, I don't know. The world's small, and the Quartier's smaller. I could find out if I wanted. Other people's affairs are so interesting, don't you think so?" It seemed to be Lance's habit to appeal for sympathy like this.

"Chiefly interesting where they touch one's own," said Alexander.

"I am interested in yours too," said Avery blandly, after having waited to admire a group of trees. "Miss Lampeter is a jolly little girl. Real spunk—nothing she won't say when she's roused."

Alexander wished to hate him for this, but he seemed genuinely to be saying the best he could for Meysie, and he had withal the superior air of the best men at his college. He had an absurd feeling that he ought, in the pause, to show acknowledgment.

"You are doing a portrait of her, I think," he said stiffly.

"Hey? Only a study. Got her pretty well, I think. I want one of that American girl too, if I can manage it anyhow; the daughter of the dyspeptic mother. They're admirable types, both girls; only possible inside their own countries, don't you know."

"Is it a series you're doing?"

"Hey?" said Lance again, for his attention was continually distracted. "Yes, for one of the papers I serve. I want a French type too. Do you know one?"

"I?" said Alexander.

"Oh well, don't jump," said Avery. "I won't ask you to produce her. I know several hundred, but I want the type. Morny has got a sister would do, but he won't let her sit."

Avery was evidently one of the people who take for granted all the world knows their circumstances and friends. Alexander happened, however, to have stored in his capacious brain the name of the Frenchman who had given Lance his room.

"Why?" he said good-humouredly; for in spite of his determined prejudice, the artist amused him.

"Why Morny won't let her? Don't trust me, perhaps. He's an odd fish, Morny. Talks of his mother. These French have such a way of regarding their mothers, c'est inouï. Tell Morny I shall make a portrait of him some day, saying 'ma mère.' You wouldn't think it either, to

hear him singing on the Pont Sully at midnight. Pretty girl over there, look, in the red extinguisher hat. Ah, she's moved away."

So Avery chattered, and Alexander felt hopeless of pinning him, or of arriving at any lasting opinion, for good or evil.

Eventually they discovered that their ways lay at right angles, and Avery had to go.

"Come up some time, won't you?" said Avery. "Bring Miss Lampeter along. Sunday's the best day for all of us." At a distance of twenty yards he added, "I'll see that Morny minds his q's in company, never fear."

So he was off, with a light, swinging step, knocking his felt hat a trifle more over one ear, and eyeing all and sundry among the passers with the glance of an intimate. Alexander stayed to look after him a minute before he left the garden. He had a curious feeling that, of his kind, Avery also was genuine. He might even have taken Meysie's escapade for granted, in his utter carelessness and absorption in ulterior things. Indeed, had he regarded it as at all important, Alexander felt he would have mentioned it among his other confidences, being plainly a man to whom any indiscretion was attractive. What, then, was he, who lived by reason, to do among all these irresponsible people? The situation was, to say the least, a little harassing.

Meanwhile, Lance Avery picked up an acquaint-

ance on the way home, and, feeling entertainment necessary, as they sat together outside a café, gave him a gay history, first of the red-haired nurse, and secondly of Alexander Fergusson. His remarks about Alexander were qualified by more penetration than politeness. "Type of man needs constant diluting, like a London boarding-house meal," was part of the description. The friend was bored about Alexander, amused about Meysie, and intensely interested about the red-haired nurse. Lance handed him faithfully all the nurse's scandal, and he struck his hands together and said he knew the man. He had also more than an inkling as to the other girl. Lance had not an idea about either, but he talked theoretically on the subject with the greatest brilliance and insight. He also disclosed his own projects with freedom, for he had a candid boyish way of sharing his newest thoughts and theories with the first comer.

"You will never get her to do it," said the friend; who, knowing Lance, was privately convinced that he would.

"Bit by bit," said Avery. "She's taken already because of the clothes. I said I had got some costumes up there would fit her, and I'd get her a brand-new rig-out at a good shop if they didn't. A woman will always rise to that. One way or another, I must have a full-length in colour. She is my duchess ready-made. It's the type I have been hunting for for months."

" Aristocratic, hein ? " said the friend.

" Pish," said Lance with vigour. " What is the aristocratic type—there isn't one. The rot they talk about blood at home—I mean in England. You would think blood and beauty must have got divorced to all eternity, to judge by the fuss they make, and the examples they produce. There's nothing in it, either. What beauty is not on the London stage, or in the showrooms of the better shops, is anywhere but in select society. I've met the exact double of Mrs. Claude-Howard in a model out of the Hoxton slums—a cleaner profile, if anything, and far better teeth. This girl figged-out, and with her mouth shut up, would be a Reynolds countess. Blood can go hang for me."

" Admirable democrat," said the friend. " I give you faces. What of hands and feet ? "

" Well," said Lance, tilting his chair, and crooking his arms over the back in a boyish attitude, " it's a matter of taste, perhaps. But, personally, I'd sooner paint a hand that looks as if it could do something. A Manchester workgirl, trying her fortune as a small dressmaker in Earl's Court, sat to me for Saint Cecilia a year or two ago : a pale, tall thing, who'd lived in back streets and barely seen the sun since she was born. I was doing Lady Cecily Lorn's portrait at that time, a commission worth two hundred or thereabouts, and got so sick of her putty fingers, I painted the hand out and made her stick it in

her muff. The muff was the more worth showing, as I told her — and she seemed quite pleased."

"And Cecilia?" laughed the friend, who was used to Lance's divagations.

"Cecilia had lovely hands, on my honour: capable and deliberate: white as well, with the finger-tips of the fine cotton worker. I put both of them on the harp, and they looked as if they could play it. Cecilia was a lily—bent a trifle, perhaps. Nagging people said my saint stooped, and I said perhaps she'd overpractised, as music-enthusiasts do. Que veux-tu? With her long neck bent as well, she was more like a Luini than most of the Luini copies I've seen. What were we talking about, I say?"

"The new beauty," chaffed the friend. "You've as many hearts as Don Juan. You must really forget past numbers, mon cher."

"I never forget any beauty," said Lance, with emphasis. "There's not too much I've come across. I have it safe, and see it when I shut my eyes, thank the gods. The worst is, it's my business to keep 'em open, at least nowadays. You can't be young for ever. Well?"

The friend was firm. "I think of Miss Grimshaw."

"Well, what of her?" Lance's impatient half-diverted look fixed and grew keen again. The slyness which was its least pleasant ingredient came back simultaneously, as he once more

took possession of the world he lived and worked in, and let disturbing visions slide.

"You've nabbed her—well and good. But see, mon cher; you, I know, are a rapid worker, yet how will she ever get the time?"

"Pooh," said Lance; "nothing simpler. Time hangs heavy on these poor wretches of baby-tenders. She and the nursling as well will be only too glad of the diversion. She will bring him up to me, as one climbs Notre-Dame, to see the view. Oh," he added complacently, "I've sketched it all, trust me."

"Your impudence!" murmured the friend, admiring. "The child will tell."

"The child will do nothing like it," said Avery. "That shows my delicate duchess is unknown to you. She has a way with children; I've remarked it."

"What about Morny?" said the friend presently.

"Well," said Lance. "What?" He leant back, his hands in his pockets. "Morny can keep off, or hold his tongue. She's my find, not his. Luckily the duchess has no French, and Morny no English to boast of."

"That's a pull," the friend admitted, "but not everything. Morny's appearance——"

"Look here," said Lance, most youthfully sulky. "I've an appearance, too, if it comes to that, and so have you. I'd have you know I'm serious in this. I want to paint, not to spoon.

The mornings I have her along, Morny'll be in the hospitals. I shall tell him nothing about the matter."

"That is what I should have advised," said the friend.

After that, Lance forgot his annoyance, and also the former engagement which he had had in mind when this sympathetic friend encountered him; and they had lunch together in great accord, the friend choosing the eatables, while Lance chose the wine.

V

MEYSIE forgave Alexander temporarily on Saturday, because she wanted to go to the Bon Marché, and she met him on the way there, and thought he would be useful to carry things. She told him she had sent the letter to her mother, and did not add that she had written another, taking back half the things she said in the first. Anyhow, said Meysie, she meant to see Mr. Avery all she wanted, and she was going to have tea with him to-morrow.

Alexander said, "Really? So was he;" and eventually discovered that Mrs. Wheeler, her daughter, and some other friends of Avery's were also to be there. Beyond this, Meysie preferred that Alec should not call for and take her, for she had no wish at all to be "affichée" as an engaged woman; from which Fergusson acutely gathered that at least one other young man was to be of the party.

So they went in comparative amity to the Bon Marché, though Meysie on her side sparred continually. But it was extraordinarily difficult to spar with Alexander; as she said, you might

as well tilt at a haystack. She spent far too much money at the shop, though she had entered with the full intention of impressing him with her bargaining capabilities. Also, though she assured him she knew her way perfectly about the enormous building, she lost herself at least three times before she came to the end of her purchases.

Alexander would fain have asked the way, but Meysie pooh-poohed him, not to mention that she was never quite sure where she wanted to get to; for some "heavenly" scarf or "really rather nice" trimming was sure to catch her eye and divert her steps at the critical minute.

It was during one excursion, consequent upon Alexander's valiant efforts to guide her to a quarter of the shop to which she really did want to go, that they came upon Gilberte buying sheets. She was in such earnest and intimate conversation with a sympathetic shopman that she did not notice Alexander, who passed nearly at her elbow. They were both shaking their heads over a pile of linen which—in the greatest confidence—the shopman really could not advise her to buy. Even should he personally lose the custom of madame, there were other sheets coming in the following week for their White Sale, for which madame (from the purely ideal point of view) would do well to wait. Gilberte seemed to be entering apologetically into details of her circumstances as Meysie and Alexander

pushed by. "Voyez-vous," he heard her saying, were it for her own household, her mother's, she would have no doubts whatever as to taking his advice. But the stock she was laying in was on commission for the household of a friend—of a relation almost, who had no foresight in such matters at all, and whose sheets were in holes. She had happened to discover the fact from a common laundress. The need was immediate—the matter imminent. The shopman leant towards her yet more earnestly, devoting now his whole intelligence to the problem, and Alexander passed finally out of earshot. He experienced an extraordinary pleasure in hearing her voice again, even though it did strike him that it rang with a keener and more genuine interest over the discussion of bed-linen than it would have done in debate upon the beauties of modern English poetry.

It was soon after this that Meysie suddenly bought a skirt, which became a necessity of life as soon as she caught sight of it. Alexander demurred to the skirt, being sure, firstly, that it was too expensive, and, secondly, that she could not walk in it. But Meysie insisted, borrowed some money from him to pay for it, and skipped away to try it for alterations. As Alexander could be of no use, naturally, in this process, he had some time on his hands; and before many minutes had passed in his vague wanderings in this world of women, upon which he had been so

heartlessly cast adrift, he found himself back in the quarter of the shop where he had seen Gilberte. He did not ask himself why he went; but the tone of her voice was still with him, and though he had seen no more than her back in passing, he had a beckoning vision of her little brown face and steady eyes among the fresh white piles of linen. Of course she was gone, thought Alexander, while he glanced about him anxiously in the press of hurrying customers. No, there she was after all, and he slackened his steps, half ashamed of his anxiety.

It seemed the ardour of debate was over; the heated shopman was waiting with folded arms, and an air that suggested man's whole duty done, and the affair relegated to the hands of Heaven. Gilberte herself was conversing, low and glibly as ever, with a stout worn little personage in black, whom Fergusson guessed at once to be her mother.

He lingered and listened, amazed himself at the spell to which he was subjected. The French girl was speaking brusquely, incisively, without endearments, and her companion had but few weak words in answer. Yet they were plainly upholding opposite sides on a question of money, and Gilberte had by no means the best of it. It seemed that the shopman had finally found for his client, in the secret recesses of the establishment, some goods that he could whole-heartedly recommend; and that madame had come up

just before the bargain closed, and wanted to exchange the treasure-trove for others of a lower price.

"Voyons, ma mère," the girl contended, "did he not give you carte blanche, André? It is not a question of a franc or two, for him."

But no, Gilberte's mother did not see it. She was there to make for her son-in-law the best bargain possible. The others were far better for their price. These were simply an extravagance. She fingered various linens nervously all the time while she spoke.

"Were he here, he would snap his fingers," said Gilberte, using a strong expression.

"He is not here," said her mother sadly. "We are here to watch over his concerns. If the money had been our own, good; but another's——" She appealed to the shopman, who bowed, shrugged his shoulders, and murmured in sympathy. He seemed, to the onlooker, to be lost in admiration of them both; and to be ready to stand, in the Napoleonic attitude, before such housewives all day.

"Of course," said Gilberte, losing patience suddenly, "it is no affair of mine."

"If it were, ma fille," said her little mother, "I might think twice about it."

There seemed to be a meaning in this, for the girl looked round, and, Alexander saw, flushed under her brown skin.

"I hope you think I am disinterested," she

said in English. She forgot that the Napoleonic shopman might know English, and Alexander caught a glint in his eye. He had sprung upon the mere hint of a romance, entering his arduous life among the world of bargains.

"They are marvellously beautiful," he insinuated, fingering the sheets, and looking affectionately at Gilberte. "When mademoiselle herself comes to marry, she could not wish for better linen."

Madame sighed, seemingly a little softened. She lifted her kind face and worn eyes in Alexander's direction, and simultaneously her daughter turned too. Catching her surprised glance, he bowed immediately, and feigned to be passing.

"Ah, monsieur the gentleman," she said, with most easy aplomb. "It is a question philosophic we have here; the prudent second best, or the reckless best—which is it to be?"

"Surely you have no doubt," said Alexander.

"No. I am with that Guinevere of ours—I needs must love the highest when I see it. So much the worse if the height is in price as well." She laughed frankly. "Take it, ma mère," she added. "Monsieur, my fellow-student here, is English and counsels it. The English have a sense of merchandise—it has made their name. This is my mother," the girl said gently to Alexander.

To his surprise, Gilberte's mother took the

informal introduction very quietly. She nodded to him, taking in his general characteristics with an absent eye. Her heart was still plainly in the linen question only.

"Well, we will have them," she said suddenly, a spark in her eye. "Truly, there is something in fine linen that seduces unawares. Heaven send my son-in-law will not blame me."

"Never, madame," said the shopman, his arms coming undone, his legs on springs again instantly. "Of that I will give you my word of honour."

The final details of the business were happily concluded, and Alexander shared in the geniality resulting from doubts resolved. He mentioned to madame in his best French that he had met her grandson at the bear-pit. Madame's face grew instantly more strained and melancholy below her kind eyes.

"Ah, my poor little one! And how did *she* behave?"

Gilberte had turned too. "*She*" was evidently a person whose proceedings were suspected by those who knew. Alexander, fixed by the four anxious dark eyes, felt uncomfortable.

"She did not seem to be attending to him much," he said to Gilberte in English. "He went to the animals for society."

"She is a woman-wolf," said madame, with a contained bitterness which was quite belied by her plaintive tone. "If I had the control of

her——" She stopped, for both the stranger and her daughter had broken into laughter.

" Ah," the girl said, " there is no person so fierce as my mother. That can easily be seen, eh, monsieur ? "

She put a tender hand on the little woman's arm, and her eyes softened and melted beautifully as they turned upon her. " I assure you, we have reason to know it, Paul and I."

" Pish, there is no end to you and Paul," said madame resentfully. " You fight and squabble ; in the end I let you leave me—push you out, indeed ; and all that ensues is, you come home in turn to worry. This question or that, I cannot walk my house now without falling over you. That is what your independence amounts to. For him perhaps one understands it." Her tone softened suddenly. " A man may study medicine in vain ; if his little finger ache, if his digestion is out of order, he comes running home to complain about it. But you——" She gave sundry little jerks with her eager hands to the collar of her daughter's dress, set her right with a pat, and pushed her away. " Go," she said, " and pay at the ' caisse.' The crowd exhausts me."

When Gilberte had gone, she took the seat that Alexander pushed towards her.

" And how do you find her English ? " she said anxiously. " Does she make progress ? Has she a chance, do you think ? She was always the best in her class, my Gilberte. A red-faced

meess at the Cours, whose name I cannot remember, said that her accent was as good as any she had known."

"I think it remarkably good," said Alexander gently and slowly.

"There! I understand you," said madame, beaming. "Aha, but I attended also the class of the red meess to help Gilberte. I sat by and listened well. What I learn for my children, I learn carefully. I do not forget."

"Mothers——" said Alexander in French, and stopped, blushing.

"You also have a mother, eh? You are her only son? Ah, ah, I have but one son also, and a mauvais sujet, I fear. But me he does not forget."

After a minute's reflection she nodded and smiled upon him, then rose briskly, gathered up her skirts, her umbrella, and a handful of little packets, and pushed away through the throng towards Gilberte.

Alexander rejoined Meysie on the upper floor with the feeling that, after the casual fashion that seemed to be the way of this singular capital, he had made a friend. Gilberte's mother, little though she promised on a first inspection, was evidently worthy of her self.

VI

ALEXANDER, owing to Meysie's defection, was left to find Avery's dwelling alone; and having received very vague directions, he was some time about it, and arrived late. He was also distracted on the way by the view from the bridge leading on to St. Louis' island, the new impression of Notre-Dame over the water, no longer staid and solemn as it appears from the Parvis, but airy, delicate, quite startling in its loveliness. Alexander could not state what was lovely in the soaring lines of the church, its looped buttresses, the branching river and the springing bridges, but he felt its harmony and completeness vaguely, and wished he had Avery's knowledge to appreciate it more. For Alexander had no love of vague emotions; even beauty he had a strong inborn desire to explain, to supplement the sense's thrill with argument. The gods had granted him unusual reasoning powers with tolerable perceptions, and his instinct was to sharpen the one by means of the other, as one sharpens a blunt stock with a knife. He was incapable of dreaming; even on the bridge he was thinking hard—follow-

ing, tracking, comparing, while never ceasing to admire. It was a great sight, he decided, as he turned away ; it was " fine," to use his favourite expression. He stored it among the " fine " things he had seen, in Paris and Oxford and Scotland ; and made note of a determination to revisit it—and, so to speak, to try again.

After some wandering in dark little alleys, he found the street and the house, and climbed a number of rather ill-kept flights of stairs, that seemed in no way to correspond with the elegant impression he had had of Avery's person. Having reached the fifth floor, he was confronted by three doors. Opening one of the doors at random, he found an extremely untidy bedroom and a mingled aroma of smoke and chemicals—no doubt the private apartment of the medical student. He prudently waited before trying anew, and was rewarded by hearing a strongly American voice say, " I never ! " followed by a burst of laughter. Doubting if a knock would be heard through the chatter, he opened the door he had fixed upon and walked in.

He came into a large bare room that seemed all windows and smelt of oil. One had the feeling instantly of being in a tower, for the front window opened not on little murky streets, but on the void, the river, and the view. There was a small model throne, on which Meysie sat alone, in an attitude she clearly intended not to be self-conscious. The artist stood in

front of her, between Mrs. Wheeler and her capable handsome daughter, who were resting with easy grace in lounge seats to either side of him, as successful in their way as two of the marble figures in the Louvre. On the step of the model throne a young Frenchman was seated cross-legged, strictly at Miss Lampeter's feet, but wearing a most detached and indifferent air when one came to examine him. He was smoking, and so was a black-browed girl in a deck-chair, with whom he was deep in conversation. On the remote flank of the company a younger girl with two magnificent plaits of black hair sat at the piano in a somewhat sullen attitude.

"Am I interrupting the music?" said Alexander with his kind simplicity, as he shook hands with those he knew. He waited to be presented to the remainder, but Meysie made no movement, and nobody else said anything. Meysie, indeed, looked not too pleased to see him, for she had evidently been enjoying herself. The black-browed girl removed her cigarette and gave him a single glance between thick eyelashes, while the Frenchman did not even turn his head, but continued hugging his knees, and chattering in an undertone.

"We've had no music," said Lance blandly. "Ania will not play unless we stop talking, and we can't stop talking for our lives."

"Now, Mr. Avery," said Agatha Wheeler,

" we've stopped heaps of times, mamma and I. It's Meysie and M. Morny are to blame."

" Nothing would induce me to stop Miss Lampeter," said Avery. " Morny I could stop any minute by filling his mouth, but the kettle is not quite boiling. Even Morny could not both drink and smoke without an occasional break in his conversation."

" Say, now," said Mrs. Wheeler " suppose we all drink tea and Miss Tschernoff plays."

" You had better look out for your piano," said Meysie in an undertone. " She makes an awful noise."

As the artist replied to the aside with an agreeable little moue of common understanding, the Frenchman at Meysie's feet turned round. It was only for a second, but Alexander saw that he had heard, for Meysie's undertones were very audible. In the same second he recognised him, and with something of a start. It was the young man he had seen his first Sunday—the brother of Gilberte.

" Ania is quite happy without playing," said the deep voice of Morny's companion. " At home she sits like that for hours without a note. When one plays for one's living, you comprehend——"

It seemed intentional, for Meysie turned quickly.

" Is she a professional, your sister ? " she said, looking down from her lofty perch with her

little mannered air. Meysie would have been highly indignant if any one had called her patronising; but a made manner, in a person with no real fund of confidence, frequently gives that impression.

"Ania sings or plays," said Paul Morny, with a kind of pride, "according as to which plait one pulls."

"Do not move, mademoiselle," said Avery, in his admirable French. "Your head designs itself to perfection against that Gothic background without; 'Painted upon a background of pale grey . . .'"

"Gold," the Americans corrected together.

"Why don't you paint her, then?" said Meysie, with childishly apparent pique. "You haven't got an Anarchist in your collection. Ania's an Anarchist—did you know?"

The elder Russian girl drew her brows together, and subsided into her low chair. Ania, looking more sulky than ever, had walked to the window, whither Morny bestirred himself to follow. Alexander found himself placed midway between the two groups, French and English speakers, and able to overhear both. It seemed to him a curious assembly in its sheer incapacity for mingling. On the one hand Lance was drawing Meysie on, with an evidently mischievous intention, into the discussion of Anarchism she had started. He subscribed to all her ignorant theories, applauded all her commonplace little

jokes. Alexander, who was placed so as to see the face of the girl in the deck-chair, tried once or twice to divert her; but he had not the tact or lightness of hand to do it; and the Frenchman, who could surely have done so had he chosen, would not. He suspected Morny of sneering, though his back was almost completely turned, and his attention apparently devoted to Ania, who talked to him in an occasional flood, with silences between, her tragic eyes devouring the view.

Alexander found the American girl friendly and facile, and conversed with an ease that surprised himself; for she ran remarks which were never quite silly, however copious, into every pause; filling out her answers until he thought of something new to say. Agatha was, however, clearly conscious of a duty to the silent girl beside her, and she aided Alexander in a well-meant attempt to link the two camps by drawing her into conversation.

"You don't know Mr. Fergusson, do you, Mlle. Tschernoff?" said she. "Didn't you say you had friends in London?"

"We have good friends in London," said the girl. She turned her narrowed eyes to them, under brows that had the look of being set in pain. Her English accent was decidedly better than Agatha's.

"And what sort of *we* is that? You and Ania?"

"I, and Ania, and the family to whom we belong."

"Is yours a big family?" said Alexander.

She lifted her expressive brows, snipping off the ash of her cigarette. "Too small," she said, "but growing."

"You're talking parables," Miss Wheeler asserted. "Aren't you now?"

"It is a habit we fall into. Parables at least are better than lies."

Alexander shrank from the tone, though she did not look at Meysie. Agatha's social aplomb, however, seemed equal to the attack.

"Oh, come now," she said. "Call us a set of ignoramuses, Miss Tschernoff. Don't call us liars. Ignorance isn't a crime."

The girl levelled at her a dark straight glance for a moment. "You are not so sure of that?" Alexander interpreted it.

After a minute she roused herself to speak. Her apathy seemed half natural, half a habit she had fallen upon in a world alien to her mind. "Ignorance in the dark is not a crime," she said; "such ignorance as that of our wretched peasants. But what of ignorance with the opportunity to know?"

"But think of all the things we have an opportunity to know," said Fergusson.

"I think of them. The most pressing are the wrongs of others."

"No," laughed Agatha, determinedly light.

" The most pressing are our own wrongs. We do not often get beyond them."

The girl shrugged, and attended to her cigarette. Alexander thought she would stop talking, and made an effort to pursue the theme, for he was interested.

" It all depends," he said to Miss Wheeler, " on the size of the *we*. What are our own wrongs ? Our personal, our family's, of our nation, of humanity. It is the point of view that matters."

" Now don't," said Agatha. " You make me feel so minute. I can't always broaden myself, like that fabulous frog. I have days of it. Other days, I'm downright afraid of bursting if I try."

" America is too big," said Mlle. Tschernoff reflectively, " and so is France. The little countries are the best at it—yours, and the Swiss." She let Alexander have her eyes a moment. " You have worked out your idea of liberty more or less, though you still make a muddle over the rules."

" Was it in England you learnt English ? " asked Alexander, who marvelled at her ready phrases.

" I finished in England," said Mlle. Tschernoff. " I began it at home, in prison. I had good time to learn the grammar there. Well ? " She looked round, for Paul Morny stood beside her.

" There is the opportunity of tea, Marie. Am I to give you some ? "

"To be sure."

"What have you been talking of?"

"Mind your own concerns. What have you?"

"Must I say, mind yours?"

"No, for that is my concern. You shall not teach Ania to flirt."

"I have been showing Ania my view," said Morny.

"Eh? I thought the room was his." She nodded carelessly towards Lance.

"So it is," said Paul; "but the view remains mine. I never sold him that."

"Do you observe?" The black-browed girl suddenly swept Alexander by a look into the dialogue. "He is of France, this youth. Even a thing so universal as a view is his."

"Surely that is what we call insularity," said Alexander, amused at her gravity. "It is commonly thrown at us."

"Vous y êtes," said the egregious Paul. "I live on an island, Marie. Therefore I am insular. Let not my noble country be accused."

She did not smile, but her serious eyes on him were indulgent.

"Where is your sister?" she said. Her French was as easy and neat as her English.

"How do I know? Working, I hope."

"Why do you hope it?"

"Girls should work," said Paul. "It keeps them out of mischief."

"Is he not shameless?" said Marie to her sister, who had also approached.

"He was relating how he escaped the police again last night," Ania said. "Tell her, Paul."

"I have no wish to hear," said Marie. "It enrages me to hear of so much spirit and courage run to waste. And what is it all for—to 'conspuer' a poor devil of a professor. Young—strong—active—intelligent——" her eye was on Paul.

"Generous — handsome," he pursued in mockery.

"Bah!" said Marie. "Go and find something to fight for, little man."

"The nearest duties——" Paul began, and stopped. "Psst! the little meess will sing."

Alexander turned abruptly, almost incredulous. He knew Meysie's small pipe so well. He loved it at home, of an evening in the little Lampeter drawing-room, with kind Dr. Lampeter sleeping in his chair. But surely here, with these singular, variously accomplished, widely experienced people, it was mistaken of Meysie to sing. She had been requested, doubtless; but how, and why? Lance was toying with her vanity, obviously, being the vanity of a pretty child. Mrs. Wheeler, pliant and affable, was easily drawn in to support him. Mrs. Wheeler's daughter knew better, Alexander was sure, though she exclaimed and said the right things on instinct in the pause.

"Scotch, Meysie," said Alexander, with a pleading look, as she sailed past him to the piano.

"They are pretty, eh—the little songs of Scotland?" said Ania, leaning to him confidentially, her knee upon a chair, her breast against the arms she folded on the back. This child's poses were all graceful and mature. At the minute, in her red blouse and worn black skirt, she looked older and more finished than the English girl, who had two or three years the advantage of her. "Will she sing them?"

But Meysie all too plainly scouted the idea. She knew better than to sing ballads in such a company. They were well enough for Alec in his sentimental moods, or for her daddy by the fire. Avery's "set" deserved a greater effort. So Ania sank into the chair she had been embracing, and Meysie sang in German, accompanying herself indifferently, though with a certain petulant decision. The French and Russians, who envisaged German music from different points of view, but in a sense equally hostile, were silent and seemingly depressed. The girl's voice was pretty enough—thin and cool: as pretty as a wren's note, to those that await the nightingale. And the nightingale sat there among them, her supple brown hands folded between her knees, one glossy braid of her hair falling so low that Morny, cross-legged on the step, could play with it.

"Exquis," said Paul, with a polite grimace;

and, although he was Gilberte's brother, Alexander could almost have disliked him.

"Will Mademoiselle Ania not——" he was beginning; but both the Russian girls rose abruptly. A society of some sort demanded their presence, as it appeared, almost at once, and they had to go. They shook hands with Morny, and looked him in the eyes; but they only bowed to their host, who held the door open with a gallant air, and had plenty to say for himself to the last.

VII

MEYSIE sat solitary on the piano-seat, her elbows very square, her long neck very straight, and her mouth pouting slightly. She would not look at Alexander, who felt himself for some reason in disgrace. Paul Morny, on the other hand, would not look at her, and beyond the few conventional comments on music he had seen fit to offer, had nothing to say to her either. He sat balanced in a precarious attitude on the window-ledge, a cynical eye upon the view he called his, and whistling an air with elegant precision which was not the air of Meysie's song.

"Know that?" he said suddenly to Alexander. "It's out of some opera. Ania plays it."

"I have no memory for music," said Alexander.

"Nor have I. But those Russian tunes stick. They've the genius for melancholy, that people."

"I'm sure the Tschernoffs are gloomy enough," said Meysie, flicking over the pages of her music.

"It is an idiot's song," said Morny reflectively. "Mademoiselle could not sing it," he added.

"Why?" said Meysie sharply.

" Because it is an idiot's song."

Alexander intervened, for he felt the two were on the edge of bickering—and they were not equally matched.

" I believe I have met your sister," he said. Something deep within Alexander told him that it was not unwise to seize an occasion to say this in front of Meysie.

The young man turned his face full upon him for the first time. When Paul Morny really looked you in the face he was pleasant. He was far more regularly handsome than his sister, though he had the plastic features that caricature themselves easily by grimacing, and though he carried all the signs of personal carelessness, rash living, and overwork.

" Where did you meet her ? " he said.

" In the Luxembourg Gardens. She needed an English word, and I had the honour of supplying it. So," concluded Alexander, " we just made acquaintance over that."

Paul's dark eyes were exploring him, but Alexander's great gift of impassivity served him well. He felt strong in the fact that Meysie was just behind him. Even this cynical youth dared risk no jest. Paul, in fact, did not try. " She is working at English for the Teacher's Certificate," he observed. " She won't get through."

" Why won't she ? " said Meysie, who was attending closely.

"Because she does not work enough," said Paul. "Girls have no idea how to work."

"You're quite wrong," returned Meysie. "Is she clever, Alec?" Her pertness, pretty enough at times, was a little too sharp. Her manner altogether suggested that she did not intend to be left out of the conversation.

"I've not a doubt of it," Alexander answered her—"in her brother's presence." At the good-humoured tone Morny's frown melted slightly.

"It is only in her presence you have, eh?" he said. "Well, you need not. The child is clever enough, in her way."

"She's younger than you, then?" said Meysie.

"By thirteen months, mademoiselle," said Paul. He let go the sole hand that supported him on the window-ledge, and folded his arms. This feat seemed to please him, and he smiled.

"Who are you talking about?" inquired Avery, who now returned to them.

"M. Morny's baby sister," said Meysie, her stiff attitude relaxing at the sight of him. "Hand me some sweets, Mr. Avery, and perhaps I shall eat them."

"That's the young woman I mayn't draw," said Lance. "It's a bitter subject, Miss Lampeter, and we had better change it."

"I'm quite ready," said Meysie. "It was Alec started it originally." This impishness

gratified her, and she proceeded beaming. "Do you two quarrel?"

"Morny and I?" Lance looked a trifle contemptuous. "When we've nothing better to do."

"What about,—girls?" Meysie looked at Alexander, and hoped he noticed. She never talked like this in London. Alexander, however, was taking stock of Notre-Dame.

"We discuss beauty in the abstract," said Paul, grimacing, "rather than the concrete, mademoiselle."

"Have you views on beauty?" inquired Meysie.

"Catholic ones," scoffed Avery, as his acquaintance, engaged in a new feat of balance, did not reply. "He finds beauty in the intestines of a frog."

"How can you be so nasty?" said Meysie, relapsing suddenly into childishness. "Do remember I am eating sweets."

"I assure you it's true; you ask him."

"I have that kind of mind,'" said Paul. "I find beauty, so to speak, in interiors rather than exteriors. I go, in fact, deeper than Avery does into all things—and people."

"He's perfectly disgusting," declared Meysie. "And *do* ask him to hold on, Mr. Avery. He'll be into the street in a minute."

"And have no exterior left," said Lance, who seemed, however, quite indifferent to his friend's possible demise.

"Exteriors remind me," said Alexander gently. "I have not seen that picture, May."

Paul looked round rather quickly, eyebrows raised. Lance, who was looking in that direction, returned him an easy smile.

"Shall we show him, Miss Lampeter," he said, "or wait till it is finished?"

"Well, I have a sort of hope you'll make it prettier," said Meysie. "It's got such a neck. I measured my proportions in the glass, Alec, and *proved* him wrong. But he's so tiresome in being pleased with it."

"He is always pleased with what he does," said Paul. "That counts for nothing." He had come rather suddenly back to the solid earth, and was sitting straight up.

"Well, *I* am not pleased with it," said Meysie. "And *I* am the important person. Get it out," she added, with her most superb air of queen to slave. Once again her vanity and impatience were most innocently apparent. To be drawn by Lance Avery, in a "series," counted for much in Meysie's life.

Kind Alexander, who suspected nothing, had a shock when Lance handed out the portrait and placed it on an easel. It was a full-length study, though not large. He regarded it for some moments, too angry literally to find words. Had the girl not been there he would have broken out; but he knew he could not in her

presence, smiling and innocent as she stood beside him; and he commanded himself as a fact so well, that Avery at least noticed nothing. He stood, easy, impudent, and debonair, beside his production.

The sketch was incredibly clever, in manner, in suggestion, and above all in the way in which it held its balance exactly on the line between fair study and flat caricature. Only the little model, blinded by her ignorant new culte of styles she could not understand; blinded by her ignorant reading of the bizarre as the "original," the brutal as the "strong"; blinded not least by her utter lack of line-lore and knowledge of form, could have failed to see its mocking intention. It was actually—bitterly exaggerated—the French view of the English miss. Lance, launching himself gaily on a new experiment, turned himself into his country's enemy, and scoffed among the very ruck of scoffers. The Englishman now standing in front of the picture, ignorant exceedingly in the art as he was, was stirred enough to see in a flash, not only his genius, but his heartlessness. This portrait, he thought, was to be published in a thousand magazines—broadcast in a society full of minds as loose as his own. The man that could do that, to a trustful little girl—"to a lady," was the way Alexander put it to himself—could do worse things. But for the deterring hand of his native caution, Alexander would then and there have

drawn Meysie out of that room, and forbidden her utterly to return there.

Turning about, he saw Paul Morny's eyes. The young man was biting his lip.

"I'm no judge, you know," said Alexander steadily. "I suppose it's awfully good, isn't it? It's—it's like her."

"The neck's too long, isn't it?" wailed Meysie, hanging on to his arm.

"Oh," said Alexander, "I dare say several things are wrong, my dear, to our undiscriminating eyes."

"I go so far," said Paul with caution, "as to say I would sooner look at Meess Lampeter."

Up went Miss Lampeter's spirits at a bound; it was evident that she had overcome the most difficult of the three men. "How nice of you," she said, beaming at him. "But it is *awfully* clever, isn't it? And you should see what a good contrast it makes to the other—the German girl. Really, I told Mr. Avery I thought he had gone too far. She *is* a *little* vulgar. Do show Alec——"

But Alec would not wait to see the German girl. By no means; he had to go, because he had an appointment. Meysie pouted, but she had rather come round to him in spite of his stiffness over the portrait; and she was satisfied, on the whole, with her afternoon. After another short sparring match with the artist, she was ready to gather up her scarves and appendages, and to follow Alexander downstairs.

"You are an old humbug," she said gaily, outside. "What made you invent an appointment so suddenly? Coming home with me is your only appointment. It was jolly nice of me not to give you away."

"I'm sorry, May," said Alexander. "I have an appointment, as it happens—at the dentist."

"The dentist?" Meysie gasped.

"I've a tooth," said Alexander, stopping on the pavement, "that must be drawn at once. It's aching too much to bear. Will you forgive me, and let me put you into a cab?"

"Oh well," said Meysie, rather offended. Toothache or none, he might have come. It was not like Alexander to fuss over his personal sufferings; he was usually better occupied in attending to hers. However, she let him call a cab, and entered it with dignity.

"I'm sorry, dear," he said humbly, at the door, and he kissed her. Once more Meysie was surprised. She drove off sitting upright, pouting and slightly flushed. Alec was a sentimental old thing, really; he might have had the tact to guess that such demonstrations were distasteful to her for the moment; however, it might just be excused—on the score of his toothache.

Alexander watched her cab out of sight, and then turned straight round and climbed the stairs again to Lance's room. He found the two men placed much as he had left them; only Lance seemed to be arguing, or defending himself,

one foot on a chair. He even looked a trifle sulky, which with him was rare. He turned his head simply to the door.

"Forgotten something?" he inquired in English, not over-politely.

"No," said Alexander. "It's something I omitted."

"Really?" Lance laughed. "You have a taste in words at Oxford nowadays. Pray salve your conscience, Fergusson."

"I will. I have to ask you to have the goodness to tear that picture."

Morny rose to his feet. Lance Avery did not move.

"Which?" he gaped.

"Miss Lampeter's."

"Tear it? You're raving, man."

"If you do not," said Alexander, letting his wrath master him, "I will."

"If you do," said Avery, straightening himself at last, and pushing his chair aside casually, "you'll have to replace it. It is my property—and unique."

"It is unique," said Alexander, "in bad taste and cowardice. You have perhaps forgotten that lady is to be my wife."

Lance laughed. "Sorry I didn't flatter her," he said; "but I'm notorious. You should have gone to another shop."

"I should?"

"Well—she. She chose to come to me—came

very much of her own accord, if you'll believe it. Well, she gets what she came for. And, I assure you, she likes it."

"Do you think that shields you? She's a child."

"Five foot eight," said Lance. "She knows what she's about."

"Gare à vous," said Morny—his first remark.

Indeed, Alexander looked as if he would have struck. But he still controlled himself—incredibly to the Frenchman who watched.

"May I ask," he said, after thinking a minute, "what you get for a thing like that?"

His tone was sufficiently contemptuous, and Avery's vanity was caught. "It might be a hundred and forty francs," he said. "Say five pounds."

Alexander took out and unstrapped his pocket-book. "I will give you that for it now," he said. "You'll take an English note?"

"Good Lord," said Avery, in mocking admiration. "How the Scotch are defamed. You're generosity itself, my dear fellow. But, unluckily, the thing's promised."

"If you're a man," said Alexander, broadening the vowel unconsciously—"you'll sell."

"I'm a man all right," said Lance, imitating, "but I'm also a poor devil of a working draughtsman. I'm under a contract for the series. Que faire?"

"This is not contracted for. You can leave it out."

" Drop the best of the series at the request of a friend. I'll mention it to the editor, Fergusson."

" You refuse a fair price, then ? "

Lance shrugged. " I refuse it."

" Oh, well then," said Alexander cheerfully, for at last he saw the legitimate joy of action. He seized the slighter man, and, since Lance was taken completely by surprise—for he had thought by Alexander's manner that he meant to argue for hours—threw him easily with a wrestler's trip. It was neatly done, as Morny, looking on with folded arms, admitted. Lance fell his length on the bare boarded floor, struck his head smartly, and lay partially stunned. Morny was then prepared to see the assassin seize the portrait from the easel, snatch it from its fastenings, and tear it in a thousand fragments. Only, being Alexander, he did nothing of the sort. He detached the valuable picture carefully, rolled it in his big hands with the deft movement of an expert, and departed, not at all precipitately, down the stairs the way he had come.

" Now," said Paul to Gilberte that evening, " do you think he means to sell it ? "

Finding the need of a confidante, he had dropped into her lodging at ten o'clock, and discovered her in her dressing-gown, drying her hair. Gilberte was not at all disturbed to receive him in this guise, and sat on a stool, shaking her long hair thoughtfully before a small stove,

while she listened to his disquisition on the incident.

"Certainly not," she said, "since he offered to buy it. He wants it as a hostage, probably."

"He will give Avery back the picture," said Paul, "if Avery gives him back the original. Dame! if you haven't ideas, my sister." He admired her as she sat.

"You're sure you are right about the jealousy," said Gilberte, frowning. "That is where I do not feel quite certain."

"He must be jealous," said Paul, "if he is not an utter innocent. Little Meess in the green gown simply runs after Avery. He says himself he never caught a girl so easily."

"As if that was evidence," said Gilberte. "What man is not ready to think any girl enchained by him? I would sooner have your opinion."

Paul, the experienced, plumed himself. "She has taken presents," he said, leaning back with a judicial air. "There's a sketch I'd like to have myself he gave her, a study of one of the Tschernoffs in character. It's superb. Avery gave it in a fit of distraction, or simply to spite me. Then there's a pendant, emerald and pearl. She wore it this afternoon, and tucked it under her dress before the other man came in. I had my eye on her. What do you say to that?"

"Humph," said Gilberte. "She cannot be so ignorant. How do they address one another?"

"That again: I'll swear it's Christian names in private. Indeed, I have heard her say "Lance" before the world. She turned it off as a joke; but she blushed—well, like an Englishwoman."

"Lance?" said Giberte thoughtfully. "Is that a name?"

"Dieu sait," said Morny. "You'll burn your hair directly, my child, if you don't look where it's getting to. I have heard Lance is short for Lancelot, one of those romantic machines. What is the matter?" Gilberte was staring.

"Well," she said at last, "I am not superstitious, praise the saints! See, Paul: what did you think of—him?"

Paul considered. "I liked the way he conducted the affair," he said, "on the whole. It was not finished, so to speak, but it was less clumsy than I expected. He had an air—how shall I say——"

"Well, you might take the trouble to say something," said Gilberte with impatience, as he waited.

"You really have fine hair," said Paul. "It distracts me. Half the women one sees wear other people's,—dog's hair—cat's hair—anything but their own. Yours seems to have roots; one can pull it."

"One did," said Gilberte, "not so many years since. I wish you would get on, Paul, because I can't stay up all night. I have a lecture at eight in the morning."

"So have I," said Paul. "But it will be conducted without me. Well, what was I saying?"

"He had an air——" his sister prompted.

"Ah, to be sure. He had the air of a man who intended to do exactly what he did. And he did exactly what he intended to do. It had an effect, Gilberte. I may adopt it. Personally, I have an intention to start with. But in the event, I do something brilliant, but different."

"You live like a cockchafer," said Gilberte scathingly; "never knowing where you are going next."

"Pardon: I am going through the Doctorat, and one or two little things on the way to it."

"You will not," returned his sister, "if you keep on saying things that are brilliant, but different, in your examinations. Say, Paul: what did you say to Sir Lancelot when he got up this evening?"

"He is Mister, simply," Paul informed her. "I was not in the room when he got up. As I mentioned, my dear comrade was stunned a trifle. By the time he came round I was studying anatomy with concentration."

"He must have remembered you were present at it," said Gilberte. "It will make it worse. Will there be a duel?"

"Well," said Paul, "I had wondered about that myself. You see, they are a couple of

Englishmen. A duel may be contrary to the prejudices of their aunts."

"Can he fence?" said Gilberte.

"I can defeat him," said Paul weightily. "I should be much surprised if M. le mari could."

"What do you call him that for?" said his sister, annoyed.

"Pardon: one makes these little slips unconsciously. It is the fault of the vaudevilles. And in England, seest thou, it is the same thing. 'The young lady I am to marry'—you should have heard him." He turned his careless glance upon her. Gilberte's eyes, however, were confronting him steadily through a veil of hair.

"If there were a duel," she demanded, "would you second him?"

"Which?" said Paul.

"Your friend, of course."

The young man flung himself backward. "Avery is not my friend," he said, his brow wrinkling. "He is my neighbour, and amusing; and I obliged him, which always leaves a touch of paternal sentiment. But beyond my room, the mere shell I lent him, I would trust him with nothing. I have no particle of confidence in him, not that!" He snapped his fingers. "As an artist, good. As an artist, I lie at his feet. As a man, I can hardly see him." Paul considered, and touched up the idea. "I seek for him in the dust," he said, "and find other worms, but Avery is not."

Content with this, apparently, he folded his arms.

"You always exaggerate so absurdly," said Gilberte, pondering. "Yet there is a certain sentiment behind what you say. Surely, if he lacks manhood, the little Miss must feel it also."

"No, no," said Paul. "In that land, do you see, there is another sex they call a gentleman: a gentleman—and that is Avery."

"Humph," said Gilberte. "Do you think so?"

"I think so," said Paul. "Do not gnaw your hair, my girl, but continue plaiting it. Avery is ill-mannered exactly in the right degree, and says his 'damn' the prescribed number of times. His coats are made of extravagantly coarse material, and do not fit him in the right places. He cuts his nails, but does not polish them. He smokes before women, but apologises. He is cordial with me, but thinks me infinitely beneath him. Well?" He stopped, for his sister caught his arm.

"Enough," she said, her eyes dancing. "I shall be driven to take notes immediately. *You* beneath him, indeed!"

"Que veux-tu?" said Paul. "I am French."

"So is he, I thought—or nearly."

"Pish. He has lived ten years in France, and has learnt all the little swear-words of the ateliers. He welcomes us, chaffs us, makes love to us,

makes money out of us, and thinks of us like dogs. Bah, what do I say? To the English gentleman a dog is much. He thinks of us like fleas, ma sœur."

Gilberte had laid her still damp head down on his arm. "He works, at least," she murmured.

"Yes, he can work," the Frenchman admitted. "But he will admit no enthusiasm. That is of the gentleman also. He mocks his own profession—his art. Worse, he mocks mine."

"Do you subscribe?" she said.

"I have done so," said Paul, "when he is amusing, and I think of something good to reply. On the judgment-day, if a 'word' occurs, I shall say it, even if I give the case away. I never can resist a 'word.'" Suddenly he patted her head, and rose. "I have a thousand pressing engagements," he said, "and here I stay chattering—with a female in déshabillé. Tell me, how does it go with André?"

"How do I know?" said Gilberte, shrugging.

"Pride—pride," said Paul, shaking his head. "Does he come to see you here?"

"No," she said shortly.

"It is wise, perhaps," said her brother. "Do you go to see him?"

"I must, at times." Gilberte laughed suddenly.

"He has left bon-bons," she said, "twice. In each case peppermint pastilles, which I dislike particularly."

"Whenever I meet him," said Paul, "he has been eating them. One perceives it in conversation. Poor André, he has an unsettled look. He will be far better married."

"And I?"

"Undoubtedly, ma petite. This farce"—he waved his hand to the walls—"can only have that dénoûment."

"When I win my Certificate——"said Gilberte, her eyes sparkling.

"You will have my congratulations," said Paul grandly, "but no wedding-present."

"Were I refused," said Gilberte, still gazing, "none would be more indignant."

"Were André refused," said Paul, "I should be more indignant yet."

"I shall talk about little Tschernoff in a minute," threatened Gilberte. "Are you serious, Paul?" She extended a hand to him earnestly.

Paul made a face at her, kissed her hand with very natural grace, and departed.

He had a fixed idea which no crafty argument could obliterate, that Gilberte was far too good for André Ledru. He was not even sure, at times, that she was not pretty. In the character of somebody else's sister, at least, she might have been. He strolled down the gaily lighted boulevard, examining other people's sisters, and thinking out the question.

VIII

PAUL MORNY might have added to his disquisition on the gentlemanly type, as studied in Avery, that it is eminently averse to a fuss. Lance came to himself furious, but sensible. It is true he gave some preliminary thought to the advantages of a public lawsuit, from the point of view of advertisement. But he grimaced as he thought of it; for Lance was, under much paint and varnish, a shy man. He took no pleasure in the notion of an "esclandre." His name had, so far, been very elegantly made. Also, Alexander Fergusson would, even in a foreign law-court, be intolerable. The bullet-headed youth was as bad himself as a lawyer, ready and able to catch him tripping verbally at any minute; and he might not improbably enjoy the public question, when Lance was miserable.

No: on the whole, he stood on Alexander's private character, and his own, in managing the affair. As they stood, man to man, he had certain striking little advantages. He had easily made out that Fergusson was a poor man and a

" smug "—or whatever the word was of Lance's University day that designated one of the unchosen. He scarcely thought of meeting him—still less of duelling ; he entered as it were on an upper stage, in the pride of his charms, his fame and his prosperity, and observed Alexander's movements, as those of some domestic animal, below. Secondly—just worth touching upon perhaps, without danger to good taste—he had Meysie. He was so sure of this that, even had the canons of good form not been endangered, he had no need to pursue it. Lastly, it was childishly apparent that his rights in the matter of the picture had been transgressed, and he thought he knew the man he had to deal with. Alexander, whatever else he might be, was honesty personified ; and he, Lance, held the screw.

He began at leisure to turn it, for he and Fergusson had some common acquaintance.

" That Scotch fellow's frozen on to a picture of mine, and I can't get him to pay for it."

This, laughingly said and repeated, was enough. It came to Alexander's ears, and he immediately sent Avery an envelope containing ten pounds. Avery sent the envelope back again, with a note to the effect that a wealthy American, who had seen the sketch, had just offered him eight hundred francs for it. (He fixed the sum at what he judged to be, for Alexander, an imprudent figure.) It was really too good to lose, said Lance, and he thought of treating with the editor.

Alexander replied on a postcard that if the American gentleman would call on him, alone, he might agree to hand over the picture. But he considered he had the first right to it.

"It's not torn up, then, at least," the painter thought, with a pardonable pang of relief. He informed Mr. Fergusson that the American could of course only deal with the artist himself, and if Alexander lost him this chance, he would naturally, as a man of honour, make it good. Lance chuckled enormously as he wrote this phrase.

Alexander replied as he expected, that he could not think of giving such an exaggerated price, but that the ten pounds were Lance's any day he liked to ask for them.

Lance dropped the correspondence, and left it to work. There was a note of soreness already in Fergusson's last missive, and he felt sure he had hit his mark. Meanwhile, with no spiteful intention of course, he played Meysie, and prepared another little cat's paw to scratch his enemy.

Alexander heard that Meysie was not very well, and hurried to see her. He found her in tears and a shawl; the latter being due to "shivers" from which she had suffered during the last two days of gloomy weather; the former, as it soon turned out, to a note from Lance Avery, informing her simply that he would not trouble her for any more sittings.

"You m-mean thing," said Meysie. "I always had my doubts of that toothache, it was so badly done. You went there behind my back, and made f-fools of us both, and now there you are!" She flicked the pitiful, bald note towards him, with the signature she so admired.

Alexander, overcome with guilt, not on account of the real charge, but of the absurd small deception she coupled with it, could say nothing.

"And now he won't f-finish it," said Meysie, leaning her pretty piteous head on her hand, "and I did hope he'd make the neck shorter."

"No, he won't finish it," said Alexander.

"What on earth has it to do with you," said Meysie, firing, "whether I go to him to be drawn or not? It's enough to make a girl wish she was never——" she was going to say "born," but she substituted "engaged."

"I wish you wouldn't think of me like that," said Alexander painfully, after a pause, "but just as a man who is trying to do his best for you, engaged or no."

"You can go and do your best for other girls," said Meysie. "You do it very badly. There's Marie Tschernoff; I dare say she wants you to look after her, and choose the men she knows."

"Don't be unreasonable, Meysie," said Alexander. "Marie Tschernoff is nothing to me."

"I wish I was nothing to you," she muttered. Alexander pursued, unheeding—

"Not to mention she has been through worse things, and is more experienced in life than I am."

"Yes, of course. You admire her for it, and you won't let me have the smallest experience of my own. As soon as I walk on my own feet for a minute you trip me up. Really, the lack of logic in men disgusts me," said Meysie.

"You must forgive me if I don't wish you to have Marie Tschernoff's experience, my dear. When I hear of any woman who has to suffer those things," said Alexander between his teeth, "I begin to think the world is wrong."

"You've been tattling with that Morny man, I suppose," the girl said sharply.

"I have met Morny once," said Alexander. "That's off the point."

"And his sister," said Meysie. "That's off the point too, I suppose."

"Do not say such things, May," said Fergusson, turning round. "It's not like you to say them."

She was silenced a minute, helpless under his power, but only writhing the more with irritation. She must prove to him—it was coming clear to her—she must *prove* to Alec she was anything but the child he thought; that she had her value in that entrancing "bohemian" world into which he would not let her look.

"You mean it's not like what you think I am," she said hotly. "Don't you think, just once or twice in your life, Alexander, in spite of

moderate first-classes, or whatever they call them—you might be wrong ? "

Alexander was silent. It was always hard to draw him into a wrangle, and what Meysie termed argument so frequently degenerated into that. Not that Alexander either expected or wished to argue with her. He thought all fair things of women, but he did not believe they could tread naturally the realm of what he called discussion. He showed Meysie the way in, from time to time, as he had shown her into the halls and libraries of the Oxford colleges. He let her chirp criticisms of the things he cherished, and flick her feminine skirts over their threshold, laugh at them once—after the harmless fashion of girls—and leave them. He had noticed that she liked to pretend to argue, and was vexed if he showed absence of mind; even at times her point of view interested him, for she brought her personality into these small occasions, and he was never inclined to treat the person Meysie less than seriously. Her state of mind was now to him urgently interesting, though her arguments were less than nothing. It was his business to follow wherever she went, and assist her where he could, so long as she did not cast him out entirely.

And still more urgent than her state of mind was her state of body. He thought of Mrs. Lampeter, one of whose kind discursive letters he had received that morning, and carried at the

moment in his pocket; he saw through her anxious eyes this vision of Meysie, with her flush, the little hollows under her cheek-bones, her pretty dishevelled hair and reproachful eyes. Try as he would to raise her to the level of womanhood she claimed, he could see nothing in her but the wayward child, maddening in her unreason, piteous in her helplessness. It was thus that he loved her, that his heart ached for her. Only so, as he was half aware, could she rest securely in his shelter, in the quarter where the judgment she fain would challenge hung suspended.

"Will you see your mother's letter?" he said gently, having waited a little.

"No, thank you," said Meysie. "I've got one of my own. What does mother write to you for?" she added.

It was a cross little snap, but the crossness of personal discomfort and ill-temper, not of suspicion. At her most unreasonable, Meysie entertained no idea that Alec would have accused her to her mother. There were proceedings of which one could never suspect him. Almost unaware she had absorbed certain rules of his character; and to those rules there were singularly few exceptions.

"She often writes to me," Fergusson said. "She has been awfully kind to me, your mother."

"Mother's kind to everybody," said Meysie hastily. You are under no obligation to interfere

with me for that, was implied. "Sending you here like a nurse," she muttered. "It's mother all over, that idea. She never thinks how things will look to others."

Still that obstinate idea of his neighbourhood as a burden, a bond, a stumbling-block in her way. Alexander, while feeling his pride wounded, did not fail to see the more delicate danger to his position. He frowned, gazing at her under levelled brows, trying earnestly to fathom the state of fever in her he half suspected.

"May," he said, on one of his rare impulses, "would you be happier free? You have only to say a word, you know."

"Do you want to be?" said Meysie in a flash.

"*I* want it? I am thinking of you."

"Sure?" said Meysie. The look she cast him was extraordinary, half shy like the woman, half truculent like the child. So strange it was that it reached anew that fibre of humour in Fergusson, and he laughed suddenly.

"I'm sure, my dear," he said. "I want you to do what's best for yourself, if only we can be sure what it is."

Though he laughed, he was rather pale. The impulse, though fairly followed up, was a strain upon his nature. He knew well all he was risking, and how he might appear in her eyes.

Meysie looked at his white face, momentarily awed, and turned her engagement ring. He had taken that ceremony with the ring very

seriously, and she had caught some of his solemnity. Also, quite apart from all that, it was a very pretty little bauble, to which her finger had grown accustomed during the six months past.

"You look very silly," she said resentfully and rested her head on her hand a moment. "I—I don't think I'm fit to think about such things."

Alexander came a step nearer.

"I think you should be fit," he said. "I mean"—struggling to be more gentle—"don't you think it may make you feel better to get your mind clear on things of—well, first-rate importance to us both." He paused, for the effort of giving her mind what was to him the obvious was a painful one. "Can't you give me something to work on," he said, more gently still. "Then I have more chance to be of use."

"Oh dear," said Meysie, who felt that sheer crossness was the only resource short of tears, since his persistence was so ruthless. "You *are* of use, if you want to know, just by being there. Be there and stay there, but don't talk—and for goodness' sake don't try to do anything."

"Unless I'm told," Alexander supplied. "I'm to be a servant, then—a waiter, is that it?" He smiled, but he looked at her inexorably, and she had for very dignity to face him. He could not believe that Dr. Lampeter's daughter did not see the injustice as clearly as he did.

Meysie was impatient of his bad taste in hammering so continually on the one point. It is unfortunate when the born aristocrat is also a woman, for any woman who stands upon her rights as such is generally inclined already to an aristocracy of outlook. Meysie had given much thought to her position, especially since she was "engaged"—without reflecting as to what an "engagement," in the mere sense of the word, signified. She assumed that the arrangement set her on a new plane of womanly dignity, giving her a fine freedom to do as she liked, whereas him it merely bound to serve her. She fastened now on his "bad taste" in questioning the position. That Alexander was not her equal socially Meysie would never in words have suggested. She would have turned her back instantly on any friend, however dear, who did so. But there were moments when she was actually not far from the assumption of such an attitude towards him, in the daily tangle of her thoughts. There were "shades," perceptible to her, that he missed. There were "ideas" on certain subjects with which she must supply him. She suffered, so she told herself, that teaching manner of his, because she was so secure of being able in turn to teach him some delicacies he could never apprehend. To put any of this into words would have been priggish, Meysie knew; but she had her ideas, and at times hugged them in secret, feeling in them her

chance of an equal partnership with a mind she had to admit superior.

"I should think you are good at waiting," was what she said at last, dropping her eyes from his, her restless fingers still turning the ring.

"Oh yes," he said. "I've waited all my life." And getting nothing more, he turned the subject to the necessity of her seeing a doctor. Though this provoked a new battle, it was one in which Alexander did not intend to be defeated, and was not.

IX

MEYSIE moped for the next few days, being forbidden by Alexander to go out, and advised to the same effect by the doctor. Thus her thoughts were turned in upon themselves, and she thought much of Avery. She was preparing a coup de théâtre as soon as fate and her environment set her again at liberty, but she could not settle what it should be, and in the interim she was extremely irritable.

She was even cross with the Wheelers, who were, or at least intended to be, most kind and consoling to her. Mrs. Wheeler enlarged upon a new theory which exhibited all illness, especially such recurrent small ailments as Meysie's, to be merely a state of mind, capable of being overcome by a well-directed impulse of the will. Mrs. Wheeler spoke much of the will in these days, lying in a deck-chair with her grey hair nicely done by her daughter's hands, and her enthusiastic eyes alternately on Miss Lampeter and the fine crochet in her own pale fingers. Meysie suffered her a good deal, and snapped at her occasionally; having come to the conclusion,

within a few weeks' acquaintance, that Mrs. Wheeler was not so "ripping" as she had seemed when she first fell in love with her.

As for Agatha, she was, in her way, more annoying still. Though not so expansive as her mother, she was quiet and earnest. Both mother and daughter seemed always to have a world to do and think of when Meysie was most idle. They were not, she was increasingly sure, true "bohemians," though they had been drawn into that set. Agatha, it is true, painted at Meysie's studio, and painted very well. But to look at or to listen to, she was in no sense "artistic." She admired Meysie's laborious styles in dress, the "tone" of her chosen dyes, the "line" of her collarless sacques, with the same charming sympathy she gave to dress-reform, and the various unsightly comforts of her mother's attire. But she dressed herself consistently and quietly in the fashion of the moment, adding to Parisian art her American trim completeness; so that, looking at Agatha, the bystander was fain to say "perfect," and attend no more to details than one would with a well-dressed man.

Agatha came to see Meysie, and was full of sensible and bracing conversation. She chose subjects with great care to please her friend, beginning with Alexander and finishing with Art. Agatha, like her mother, admired Alexander enormously, though she had not quite

Mrs. Wheeler's hushed reverence on the subject of Oxford, and though, knowing Meysie rather better, she did not so openly congratulate her. Yet whenever she could get hold of "Meysie's young man" she made friends vigorously, and as her intelligently inquiring mind dovetailed nicely with his marked talent for expounding, she found the intercourse entirely satisfactory, and did not scruple to tell Meysie so.

On the whole, though it hardly soothed her, Meysie preferred her on this subject to hearing her on that of Lance Avery. For Agatha preserved on this also her sensible attitude, having an air of looking around and beyond him which was, in Meysie's state of fever, nearly intolerable. She could only come to the conclusion that Agatha did not the least realise Avery as an artist; and was led by slow stages from stinging retorts to a superior silence, while mother and daughter exchanged the shuttlecock of criticism. The idea of their presuming to patronise *him*, she thought with fury—and yet they did.

"Of course, dear," said Mrs. Wheeler, "Mr. Avery, as a craftsman, is able. When one compares him with ——, and ——, and ——," names, French and English, came tumbling out of her well-stored mind, "Yes, I may say he has unusual ability."

"You may indeed," Meysie muttered.

"I reckon art," said Agatha calmly, "by what will live."

Mrs. Wheeler dropped her crochet in admiration.

"The Future," she said, gazing past Agatha in wide-eyed musing. "Yes, yes, it is Posterity that matters. Will posterity applaud Mr. Avery's efforts, and if so, on what special account?"

"Certainly not for his bitterness," said Agatha. "Bitterness, to me, is the symptom of a small mind—limited, let us say."

"I shan't say anything of the sort," said Meysie. "It's the habit of little potty—I mean petty criticism that is small—always seeing faults first. As if all great artists hadn't got mannerisms."

"No, dear," said Agatha relentlessly. "Mannerisms are a trick of hand. The bitterness to which I refer is a turn of mind. It's what he is rather than what he does."

"Wait," said Mrs. Wheeler momentously. "Do not let us undervalue technique. Remember Professor Horsman's lecture in Philadelphia on that subject."

"Thank goodness I've forgotten it, mamma," said Agatha. "I'd sooner anyway trust my own eyes and instincts than Professor Horsman, who was more a bluebottle than a man if I remember right." She frowned lightly a minute, swinging on her rocking-chair. "If we undervalue Mr. Avery, it's not for lack of study and comparison," she pronounced at last.

"No indeed," said her mother, in reflective complacency. "Yet recollect how the mind

here is drenched in the genius of all time, the genius of the Louvre. Might that not—I do not say it has—but might it not set one as it were on the wrong plane for judging contemporary art ? "

The casual pause after this made it sound quite impressive ; but it was clear by Agatha's next remark that she had not given it a moment's attention.

" Perhaps," she said, in generous recognition of Meysie's disdainful attitude, " I have not studied his work sufficiently—or himself. It's a pity we are not going down there Thursday."

Meysie started, and then controlled herself.

" Thursday ? "

" He asked us to go with him to St. Cloud, and come back by the last boat and dine with him in town."

Meysie was aware of this. She had had a note herself from Lance, subsequent to theirs, written with an engaging terseness, and begging her to join the party. She had not yet answered or shown it to the Wheelers, waiting for a lead from Agatha to mention casually that she had received a separate invitation. She enjoyed a pleasant little feeling of secrecy in carrying it about tucked into the loose front of her frock, and she had discouraged a proposal of Alexander's for the Thursday on the strength of it.

" Why on earth don't you go, then ? " she said sharply, in the whirl of her disappointment.

"Well," said Agatha, calm as ever, "there's Ania Tschernoff's concert that evening, and we should never trust Mr. Avery to bring us home in time for it, not to mention changing."

"Ania Tschernoff? You don't know *her* particularly, do you?"

"It is not for personal reasons," explained Mrs. Wheeler, "that Agatha and I have decided to go. This soirée is devoted to Russian music, I hear; and I have reminded Agatha that it is exactly there that we have a large gap—une immense lacune—to supply. French music we feel quite competent to speak of now, German naturally, but Russian——" her pale hands indicated, "no, we must be silent. We wait an opportunity to learn. In short, speaking for myself, I welcomed those greenish tickets that Miss Tschernoff had the kind thought to send."

With this brisk finish her eyes shone upon Meysie, and she resumed her crochet.

Agatha swung, smiling, in her chair. "Isn't mamma too lovely," she murmured. "The seats at that horrid little hall are as uncomfortable as possible, and she would just have revelled in the sunset on the river. However, it's all fixed up now, for I have sent the pneumatic card to Mr. Avery to explain."

"You wouldn't feel like both, honey?" said her mother anxiously.

"No, I would not," said the girl, still smiling.

"Only I had a notion you were thinking of me,

perhaps, in refusing Mr. Avery. With the smallest exertion of will, I could accomplish both—and enjoy them too," Mrs. Wheeler added courageously.

"So long as you have not a backache anyway to enjoy on Friday," said Agatha.

She rose as she spoke, looked at her little watch, and removed herself with her usual graceful alertness in the direction of her next engagement. Her mother also apologised and departed, and Miss Lampeter was left with burning cheeks on the sofa.

After a period of inaction, Meysie raised herself and wrote a note.

"What is the matter?" said Paul Morny to Lance on Thursday morning. He had poked his head into the artist's private apartment, the third room on his storey, because Lance, who had been late the night before, had requested to be shaken at nine. Paul himself, as his examination approached, had taken suddenly to early rising, with an ease that proved his adaptability, and promised well for his future profession, and he had worked grimly for four hours before he appeared at the door as requested. He found shaking unnecessary, for Avery, though still in bed, was awake and grinning over his correspondence.

"Look here," said Lance. "Are you at liberty this afternoon?"

"Oh, quite," said Paul. "I have three lectures and the laboratory to choose from."

"Good. Then you may as well come to St. Cloud and avoid the necessity of choosing."

"To St. Cloud? What the devil for?"

"To entertain Miss Lampeter."

Paul shut his mouth, which had been open. "My duties claim me," he said. "I regret it, Avery."

"Oh, but come—look here," said Lance, moving lazily as his neighbour prepared to depart. "I've got too many of them on my hands."

"Whose fault is that?" said Paul; but he paused. "I thought that petit-bleu yesterday was to say everybody had refused. You threw up your hat."

"I always throw up my hat when anybody refuses anything," explained Lance, "because I never make an engagement without regretting it when the hour approaches. That has nothing to do with the invitées, who are usually charming."

"Who are the invitées in this instance?"

"They were Mesdames Wheeler and Miss Lampeter."

"Who have refused?"

"All but Miss Lampeter," said Lance blandly.

"Impossible," said Paul, turning.

"No," said Lance, "that is just my luck. So is the fact that in the gaiety of heart induced by the first refusal——"

" You countermanded the dinner," said Paul.

" No, mon cher. I invited another woman to partake of it."

" Sapristi ! And now you regret that too."

" Naturally. I am made," said Lance, flinging himself back on the pillows, " for happiness, and these contretemps are always occurring." He looked singularly complacent all the same. He waited, obviously for his friend Morny to pull him out of the dilemma.

Paul twisted his mobile face, and looked at the calendar. " What's to-day ? Thursday ? No, certainly I can't come."

" You can't really have to work, you know," reasoned Avery, who had a strong idea that Morny lived to waste his time. " That's all nonsense."

" Hardly, when the examination is Monday."

" Work Sunday afternoon," said Lance.

" I have a concert to-night."

" *You* have ? " Lance stared. " Ho, ho, the little Tschernoff. Well, she will never miss you."

Morny twisted his mouth again. He was used to Lance's form of sympathy, as he was used to being commandeered on every kind of emergency. But still he waited, staring out of the high window upon a singularly ugly court. Lance was surprised and a trifle annoyed at his reluctance.

" I'll pay your expenses," he said suddenly. He was really at his wits' end to know what made

the fellow hesitate. What was he there for, if not to oblige him ?

Paul gave a short sigh. Still gazing out, he had a fleeting vision of the remote circumstances in which he should conceivably be at liberty to knock Avery down.

" Are you aware of what they will be, the expenses ? " he said under his breath.

" You're coming," said Lance impatiently.

" No."

" Deuce take you, why not ? "

Paul shrugged. " The expense is too great, perhaps. Ask the Englishman."

" Cursed if I will ! " said Avery, who was very cross indeed.

" Why," said Paul, " must you have a partie carrée ? It's sheer convention."

" Because I must."

" Who is the other woman ? " Paul, after wandering a little about the room, remembered he had forgotten to ask this.

" You'll know if you come."

Paul laughed at his face, which was sly and sulky as a child's. " I thought it might be the red-haired model," he chaffed, as he prepared to retire.

" What if it is ? "

Paul whistled and stopped. " You mean it, Avery ? "

" It's no affair of yours." Then, seeing the young man linger, curious, he was minded to

retaliate. "It's your one chance of seeing her," he said. "She's to wear the dress I got her for the "Mondain" series. She'll look all right, at any rate."

Paul swore to himself, his back against the door.

"Look here," he said, after a pause. "Is Miss Lampeter used to that?"

Avery shrugged. "If she comes where she's not wanted, she must take what she can get. It may be amusing," he added. "I mean, if my lady Ruby plays up. And she will, with another girl there. It will be more than half a joke to see them meet."

"Is that her name?" Morny spoke to gain time.

"Well-named, you'll admit when you see her. Give her a chance and a dress, and she'll reduce any woman near her to ashes. As for la petite Meysie——"

"Avery," said Paul suddenly, "I am yours till eight o'clock; not an instant beyond."

"Ho, ho!" Lance collapsed back on his pillows. "That was all it needed. You had not realised the circumstances, eh?"

"I had not."

"You realise your part in them?"

"I hope so." Through his friend's laughter Paul kept his melancholy gravity.

"The work goes hang," laughed Lance, "and the concert too."

"The work will be different," said Paul im-

perturbably. "As for the concert, I shall be there when the doors are open."

"You will? You'll miss your dinner."

"Ania will not miss me," said Paul. "Your theory is she would not in any case. But do not trouble to repeat it, Avery. I go."

When he was in his own room again, he said to himself—

"The little fool. Oh, the poor little fool."

X

MANY things in life were puzzling to Jean Ledru. He approached life in a philosophical spirit, but he needed all his philosophy. He could have gone straight ahead upon its chequered road, storing his mind with interesting and novel facts at every turn, had it not been for inexplicable terrors which lurked by the way, and sprang out with barely a warning upon the astonished philosopher.

"Maman," stout and gentle, had been a decidedly comfortable fact, soothing in her sameness from day to day, a point in which she contrasted favourably with papa, and still more favourably with grandpapa. When maman vanished mysteriously, and did not re-emerge among his surroundings, having satisfied his mind by strenuous inquiry that she really never would come back, Jean was fain to content himself with the cook Amélie, generously transferred by grandmaman to his father's household. Amélie at Montmartre had already been an interesting acquaintance, and became rapidly a faithful friend. Unfortunately she vanished too, not many months after the English lady-nurse's

arrival; and the astonished and indignant Jean found that he might not even go into the kitchen to make the acquaintance of her successor. "Meess Nurse" said that well-bred little boys never went into the kitchen, or tu-toyed the servants, or accepted bread and brown sugar between meals in return for avoiding certain subjects in his father's company at dinner-time. Of course Jean would have refrained from telling his father about the Sunday party in the kitchen without the gift of the "tartine"; only he had neither seen at the time, nor could he see after Meess Nurse's arguments, any good cause for not accepting it. One ate when one was hungry, and the very aspect of brown sugar was enough to make one so, even should it happen to be just after dinner. His reason was not convinced by stories about little English boys; and it was only when Meess Nurse said she would give him a good slap if she found him at it again, that Jean abandoned the lines of pure logic with a sigh.

The power of this tall stranger to slap or shake him was actually the least of her terrors. At first he could not even understand what she wanted of him; but Jean was quick, and he soon learnt to follow what she said, even when she was in a rage. It was not so much the quickness of her speech as the loudness to which he objected. His mother's voice had been soft, like his grandmother's; his Aunt Gilberte's, though not exactly soft, was clear and agreeable. Amélie, best of

all, had said little or nothing, but had merely replied "yes," or "no," or "tiens, chéri," to Jean's flood of confidences, and given him things to eat when he was tired of talking.

But Meess Nurse shouted, even when there was no necessity to shout his answers down; for she made Jean dizzy after a time, and he refrained from replying or contradicting her. The English little boy, it seemed, never contradicted his nurse, least of all did he call her "menteuse"—even when she evidently was that on the plainest showing. Nor did he cry when he was given cold baths to which he was not accustomed, nor did he complain of pains in his legs when he was taken long walks in the Bois with Meess Nurse's friends on Sunday. After all, Jean reasoned, what did it matter to him what boys did in England? He was Jean Ledru; and the English (at least, according to the illustrated history his aunt had given him) were unamiable-looking persons with long teeth and side-whiskers that were palpably absurd. They had been detestable in the story-books even before Meess Nurse's arrival; after that event they became quite intolerable. He used to stab their heads with his forefinger one after another as he lay on the floor, and make really frightful faces at them unseen by Meess Nurse. Sometimes in moments of ungovernable rage he would have spat upon them; but that his Aunt Gilberte had forbidden him to do; and as she said things clearly and

slowly, Jean attended to what she said. Anyhow, under the attentions of his dirty forefinger, the English officers' worst features were rapidly becoming obliterated ; and, as time went on, and no new story-books arrived to replace the old ones, the page even showed interesting symptoms of wearing through.

Before it quite did so, however, Jean met the English artist and the black bears on one and the same miraculous morning. The bears lent a glamour to life, and satisfied a need of his being. The artist made him adjust his ideas upon the English a little. He had a pleasant and amusing way of talking, though his talk was directed principally to Meess Nurse ; he had a fascinatingly dirty box full of mixed chalks, and a book half full of pictures. Once he had carelessly drawn a bear in three strokes, and Jean had adored him and the sketch until with equal carelessness he crumpled it up. Yet another striking point to the artist's account, he put Meess Nurse into a good humour the days they met him, and led her to go frequently to the gardens, and to linger there long to chatter. What they talked about Jean with his scanty English could really not be bothered to discover, especially as investigations of the strange animals claimed all his leisure. A day came, to be sure, when the artist's sketch was finished, and Meess Nurse abandoned the resort suddenly and completely, and no prayers of Jean's could lead her to go back. But as

though by way of recompense for this trick of Jean's peculiar fate, a new chapter of romance began to open before him.

He was hurried out early after breakfast, tugged up one great boulevard of his crowded quarter, and down another, and made to mount, with no breath in his little body, long flights of tiresome stairs.

Then, in a small room, Meess Nurse with much giggling changed her dress, under the eyes of the interested Jean, for a long, straight sack of velvet with hanging sleeves ; and letting down the plaits of gorgeous hair which he respectfully admired when she was in bed in the morning, fastened them up in an altogether new and confounding fashion. Jean, who had a conventional mind, did not think her pretty thus, but the artist plainly did ; for, upon their moving to the larger room, he began to paint her at once on a large and delightfully smelly canvas.

When Jean grew tired of sitting to watch the way he smeared it, he stole away to explore the corners of the room. Sometimes his investigations led to the oversetting of a canvas, and then the artist swore, his nurse shouted, and—if the model happened to be bored, or piqued by her companion's fits of inattention—Jean was seized, shaken, and turned out upon the stairs.

These were most miserable occasions, for the stairs of the artist's mysterious dwelling were dark, and the waiting-time was long. Jean

wiped away his tears with his cuff, one after another as they came, lest Meess Nurse should observe signs of them later and scoff; and he took to reflecting at length whether he would rather be an artist or a bear-keeper when he became a man, and listened at the keyhole to catch scraps of the conversation within, and generally did his best to pass the weary time. Once he found a black beetle on the staircase to amuse him; and once, when suddenly overcome by the terror of the cavernous place on a dark day, he had stolen into another room facing that of the artist, and discovered something even more delightful and consolatory. This was a photograph of his Aunt Gilberte on the chimney-piece of the room. Jean was not exactly surprised to see it there, for no fresh discovery in life surprised him at present; but having gazed at it a little with round and fascinated eyes, and touched its cheek with his forefinger that there should be no possible mistake, he had abandoned further escapades for the day, shut the door of the room softly, and sat upright on the top stair in exemplary virtue until Meess Nurse came out.

Awful vengeance attended him, he knew, should he ever tell his father, or still worse his aunt, a word of these visits to the artist. His father, he heard, would be extremely angry—Jean supposed with him. Now he had no wish at all to make his father angry on the rare occasions when he enjoyed his company alone.

When Meess Nurse went out for the evening, and his father dined at home, alone or with friends, much advantage from the happy conjunction of events accrued to Jean. "Papa" gave him all the sweets and cream Meess Nurse at ordinary times forbade, and so much wine in his water that everything papa said seemed excruciatingly funny. His father was a witty person, Jean was sure. Gales of laughter wrapped the sense of his conversation with his friends, especially when these were younger men. Even Meess Nurse laughed sometimes when he spoke at table, though commonly she was silent and haughty. It was only after wine, though, that papa was bold enough to jest in Meess Nurse's presence. In private he often said strong things of Englishwomen: and had it been possible to credit, Jean could even have imagined at times that papa was as afraid of her as he was himself. At any rate, since her advent the occasions grew rarer that the master of the house joined his family for the evening meal.

So things went on, and Jean, from being interested in the studio visits, grew unspeakably tired of them; and Meess Nurse, who was by no means always in the good temper first induced by the artist's acquaintance, became even more violent, unaccountable, and overbearing. When he whimpered with fatigue, he was called a beastly little Frenchman (the latter word, he grew to realise, was also a term of abuse);

when he turned obstinate, and refused to go altogether, he was left at home, locked in Meess Nurse's bedroom, and promised "something" if he stirred till she got back. This alternative of dreary suspense was so fearful, that Jean went with her next time quietly enough; but as the days passed, his little monkey-face got thin, and his eyes grew large and strained. He wondered why his grandmother never came, but only left harassed little presents and messages; and he longed in vain for the good times past, the black bears, and his Aunt Gilberte.

Then at last dawned a day of terror and marvel, one of the memorable days of his life. Meess Nurse had come back from the studio the morning before with a big box; and on this afternoon she began to dress herself up in things she took from it, and to become unrecognisably splendid. Jean watched with eyes and mouth open, and presently asked her where she was going.

"Never you mind," said Meess Nurse. "And let that powder-puff alone."

"Shall I get my boots?" said Jean, dropping the puff and clasping his hands before him.

"No," said Meess Nurse. "You'll stay quiet at home and shut your mouth."

This was a frequent command of hers, possibly because Jean, like his Uncle Paul, had a habit in perplexity of leaving it ajar. He shut it and kept silence, occupied with presentiment.

"May I stay in the kitchen?" he ventured presently.

"Not you," said Meess Nurse. "Cook's gone to the country, and you'd be at the currants."

Jean could have told her that cooks always locked the currants, but he had no leisure to enlighten her English mind. He gazed at her dumbly, his mind almost dazed with the situation. They were both going to be out, then: they were *all* going to be out: and he——

He had a faint last hope that he might be going up to see Marguerite on the top storey; but that hope was also quenched as soon as he dared to breathe it. Marguerite, one of six, with a round head and tight plaits, was not approved by Meess Nurse, though Jean had long admired her greatly.

Well then, it became clear that he was to be alone, shut alone in the house, not as once before for a few hours before lunch, but for the whole long afternoon. He stared stupidly at the elegant form with the pile of red hair, until she told him to look at something else.

After that he could only try feebly to lengthen the time to her departure; and as his little devices were very obvious, Meess Nurse grew increasingly annoyed with him. Finally, realising in a rush the full import of her going, and the meaning of the key she extracted from the outer door, he made what she called a "scene," screaming in a fashion to be overheard by the lodgers on the entre-sol beneath.

So Meess Nurse made a scene also, though a quieter one, for prudence' sake; and Jean, shaken and sobbing, was detached from her skirts like a burr, and dropped in a helpless lump on the bedroom floor. Meess Nurse, having successfully terrorised him by threats into silence, allowed herself a few vague promises of future gain if he were good: words that meant nothing at all to the child, whose whole horizon was filled with the immediate horror of his abandonment, and the dim vision beyond of the dark night finding him alone in empty rooms. Miss Ruby Grimshaw was, fortunately for herself, not an imaginative person. She was secure in the fact that neither master nor servant could be in before dark; and she was bent, in a sort of rage which had grown from a long, sullenly borne deprivation of what she called her rights, on the day's pleasuring. The presence of the child who was her charge would needs spoil this. The child's demands on her must therefore be eliminated.

He could do no great harm where he was, she thought to herself as she rustled downstairs, given the free run of the appartement for a few hours; and later, if necessary, it could always be made up to him.

That there was any offence in a child's world that could never be made up at all, by half an hour's feeding or fondling at some future date, was what Meess Nurse, called a lady by all her friends in England, could never have admitted.

XI

ALEXANDER had seen nothing of Meysie for practically a week, and was beginning, in spite of all the working courage with which good sense could supply him, to feel a little desperate. He tried to define his position, and found each time, owing to the network of feminine prevarication in which he was enwound, that he could not. He tried, following her indications, to forget that he had a position at all; and instantly, seeing her denuded, felt her claims stronger upon him. He tried simply to wait and work, those things that sound so simple to accomplish; and found, firstly, that he was himself nerve-tried and feverish; and, secondly, that his brain had been put out of gear for abstract questions by the conning of nice human enigmas.

He felt he had lost confidence in Meysie; and harder still for his pride to admit, he had lost confidence in himself: a relic possibly of some uncertainty left by the convulsion to his health in the spring. He no sooner admitted to himself that he was anxious about the girl morally and physically, than he abused himself for weakness,

prejudice, and unjust suspicion. He tried to formulate a complaint of her, fruitlessly. He believed she corresponded with Lance Avery, but beyond a light in her eye at mention of his name, he had absolutely no proof of it. He suspected that she shrank from him, Alexander; yet all her excuses, from a girl who was not well, were acceptable—would have been natural in one who had no reason to desire his company. All his straight lines, in fact, seemed tangled, all his outlook clouded; and he returned every day from hours of profitless tramping unnecessarily tired in body and mind; for still, in spite of warnings past, he felt impelled to make his body pay to the uttermost for his mind's disorder.

His instinct was, to go to women for help in his difficulty. Three women came to his mind with a natural readiness that was encouraging. First, his own mother, to whom he wrote some sort of cheerful scrap every evening, collecting the scraps when a five-sou stamp would just cover their bulk, and despatching them to Scotland twice a week. He had not hitherto dilated much to his mother upon Meysie, whom Mrs. Fergusson had seen once, and had treated forbearingly. But now he began to dilate a little more. In one letter he almost unburdened himself, and waited rather breathless for the response. To his surprise, when it came, his serious mother was playful. "She's just playing you," Mrs. Fergusson informed him. "You

must do the gay and gallant a little, with the young thing—even if you should have to go a wee beyond your nature. We are all silly in the spring-time. I remember——" and the old lady dropped into autobiography.

Alexander pictured himself doing the gay and gallant against Lance Avery, and smiled grimly. He put his mother's letter away with a pile of others he carefully preserved, and lay in wait to catch Mrs. Wheeler.

It was a little hard, it seemed even a little brutal, to tie Mrs. Wheeler down to the facts of life, there were so many theories, newborn or at least new-furbished, on which she wanted his opinion. Up to the moment when he caught her in the gardens there seemed to be nothing but his opinion for which she had been waiting before adopting a final decision on all these points. When he, after some necessary rambling, began to enter on his difficulties, Mrs. Wheeler became dangerously cheerful. Owing, no doubt, to a sedulous practice of will-power all the morning, and to the newly presented duty of putting the best face on personal inconveniences, she was inclined to see all things couleur de rose. Not that she was unsympathetic. None was more prompt at call than Mrs. Wheeler ; nothing could be more marked than her gift for " hunting up " an opposite point of view, and adopting it eagerly during the term of her conversation with its possessor. Mrs. Wheeler, given half an

hour's quiet chat, would probably have sympathised with Lady Macbeth over her husband's lack of spirit, or with Nero on his taste for the violin. Now she began to soothe and encourage even before Alexander had made his position clear; and he scarcely recognised his own prospects in the bright light Mrs. Wheeler cast upon them.

It seemed she had quite longed for an opportunity of telling him how sensible she considered it " in " him not to fasten Meysie down too much. Meysie was the dearest thing, but any one could detect she had a growing mind. Let her alone to have her experience now, and she would be the less uneasy after marriage. Young girls must have their good time. Agatha had always claimed hers, and her mother had had no thought of refusing it; for the young, as much as the old, had their rights. (Here ensued a theory.)

Meysie's health? Oh, but she was much better lately. The Paris air was real exhilarating, when you got accustomed to it. She had brightened up the last two days; she had " made a stand," and was going out again.

Where was she going out? Oh, Mrs. Wheeler could not be sure. Meysie and Agatha had a million things—she did not enter into half their plans.

Alexander, thinking of a recent refusal, asked if they were going out together on Thursday evening. No, Mrs. Wheeler could reassure him; for that was Miss Tschernoff's concert, and

Agatha had just promised to see her through it ; for, say what Alexander liked, two heads over Russian music were better than one.

Alexander issued from the interview more puzzled than ever, feeling vaguely indebted for her interest, and guilty for having drawn so little sustenance from it. He left her on excellent terms, yet he felt it was the end of Mrs. Wheeler as a confidante.

So he came to Gilberte. He wanted her so dreadfully ; the void seemed to have grown and gaped within him since he had last heard her strong, low voice. The blessing of a sister had been denied to Alexander, and it made longing surge in him to hear Paul Morny talk of Gilberte. Not that Paul had spoken of her much, and Alexander dared not press him, but his few careless words had sufficed to revive her image and her glance in his memory.

He knew her address. He passed the house constantly in his meanderings about the Sorbonne. But—could he go without annoying her, was the all-important question. She could not want him ; she had a thousand more important things. There was her work—quite an important matter to Alexander ; and her family at Montmartre, with the cross father and the worn little mother ; and her other little family in the more elegant Rue de l'Université ; and countless friends and classmates naturally.

So Alexander debated, and watched, and longed, but never passed the dragon-concierge who guarded Gilberte's outer gate, though he had long known that official by sight as well as his own.

He was wandering restlessly in the small streets of the Panthéon quarter late on the Thursday of Avery's party. It was a cold, windy evening of June, not unseasonable to his northern ideas, but adding to his anxiety in other directions. He had called at the pension before four—intending at least to have tea with his recalcitrant maid — and was somewhat confounded to be refused. The message was simply that Miss Lampeter was out ; and he had the choice of believing that she would not see him there, and of believing that she had risked herself abroad on what he considered an entirely unsuitable day.

He went on to the library and attempted to read, but found his mind too disturbed to attend to his book ; so he issued again on the streets, and made his way vaguely in the direction of his lodging.

It happened that in a retired place he came upon a flock of small boys engaging in teasing one of their number, and that the smallest of all. Alexander looked at them as he passed, but absently. They made a great noise, but had no more power to disturb his thoughts than a flock of chattering

starlings, or rooks building far above his head in a college garden at home. Yet they challenged attention, for their appearance was peculiar, and they were up to mischief of a more than usually conspicuous kind. Most of the gang were strangely clad in strips and tags of coloured paper, which they had been engaged in tearing from a hoarding well-concealed from the eye of authority. Thus bedizened, they leapt and whooped about the smaller figure, who shrank against the wall, seemingly more frightened than flattered by their attentions.

Alexander, having walked by in abstraction, turned at the end of the street and looked back doubtfully. The noise had stopped with surprising suddenness, which may have been what roused him. On thus turning, he learnt the cause. The flock of Red Indians had scattered to the winds, or melted into the neighbouring houses, and a policeman had the smallest boy by the collar.

At this Alexander stopped altogether. Justice, it seemed to him, as is the way of blind Justice, was fixing on the wrong delinquent. Something had to be seen to, and he had been, though abstracted, a witness. He strode back, and came up to the pair.

"Here," he said, in the cordial tone that covers many faults of accent. "I don't think that young fellow was one of the gang."

The despoiled hoarding was not, however, the police-agent's immediate business. "Monsieur

is right," he said with solemnity. "Those are little brigands, who need the stick. But this would seem to be not of them. *This* is a lost child."

Having thus classed the object, which was crying bitterly with fists in its eyes, and made a note of it in a book, he prepared to take action, and find a collection of other objects in which to store it. But he was prevented by the object falling against the stranger and clasping his legs.

"A la bonne heure," said the interested agent. "It knows monsieur."

"Why, it's Jean," said Alexander, not less surprised. "What are you doing over here, Jean, eh? Looking for the bears?"

"Bears," said Jean hopefully; and added, after consideration, "Take-a-walk, sir."

He was a pitiful little spectacle, and without his sudden advance, Alexander could never have known him. His small monkey-face was dirty and draggled with tears. His blouse was torn, and pulled over one shoulder by his late tormentors; and absurd rags of coloured paper, presumably also their legacy, were clinging to it and to him.

"I know his people," said Fergusson to the agent. "I will see to him."

"Good," said the agent. "Monsieur has its address." With which he carefully effaced the note he had made in the pocket-book; and with a "Courage, my little captain," strolled on his

way. It was not until he had disappeared round the corner that Alexander recollected that beyond the name of one of the longest streets in Paris, he had not got Jean's address at all, and that his resources for finding it were quite doubtful.

"Take-a-walk," repeated Jean, staring at him through a kind of Toby-collar of old paper, which made him look like a very dirty and very absurd small clown.

"Suppose we have that off first," said Alexander. "You are not a sandwichman, and we can dispense with advertisement. After that we will take-a-walk towards home perhaps."

"Home-perhaps," echoed Jean, not fully comprehending, but relieved by any suggestion. Between them they pulled his paper decorations off; and Jean-François Ledru emerged more like himself, but evidently pale and frightened.

He squeezed up to Alexander as he stood debating, and pushed a cold little hand into his.

"Vite," said Jean invitingly, "Allons-y."

"But where, my man?" said Fergusson, scratching his chin. "That's the question."

"Bears," answered Jean; and started incontinently, tugging, as though in great agitation, at his escort.

"But look here," protested Alexander, "they are shut up to-night, you know. Fermé."

Jean gazed wide-eyed at him, tugging always. They were moving, Alexander reflected, away

from the quarter of the town where he supposed this infant lived.

" Listen," he said suddenly, in all the French he could muster, stopping the child. " We must go the other way : there, that way, do you see ? To nurse."

The child, still staring, suddenly burst into frightened sobs.

" No, no, no," he cried, seizing and kneading at the young man's hand. " Bears—bears." The garden of animals was, it seemed, in the whole wide world of Paris, his only haven of consolation.

" Poor mannie," said Alexander, moved by his anguish. " See now, be quiet and listen. We can't go to the bears to-night. I think what you want is supper."

The word seemed to have its effect, for the foreign child's excitement calmed a little.

" A good supper," repeated Alexander, sure of his common words. " A bath, Jean. Sleep all the night, and the bears to-morrow. What do you think ? "

Stooping down, he lifted the little scarecrow up in his arms. Jean clung instantly round his neck, in perfect confidence. The large stranger with the curious accent seemed to have divined his wishes accurately.

" I believe," said Alexander, with a great and grave resolution, standing in the empty street, " I shall take you to your aunt."

" Tante," said Jean, between his final sniffs. Apart from what the garden called " great ferocious animals," an aunt was a thing that had its advantages.

Gilberte was having a party.

Alexander had been privileged, some weeks since, to be invited to a party given by Meysie's " set " at Colombin's. They spent a good deal of money, and laughed much, and wore pretty clothes, and held a limping conversation in several languages on stock subjects. Alexander had been impressed ; but he had not understood all the jokes that passed, he had not had enough to eat, and he had felt apologetic to Meysie for not enjoying it more.

Gilberte's guests were all girls, and brought their own cups with them. They had one plate, fortunately large, to hold the cakes. They had one spoon, indifferently small, to stir sugar into the cups : and Gilberte's guests required a good deal. They had, moreover, one subject of conversation, entrancing and inexhaustible, which was their approaching examination. The subject, when the guests grew cheerful after tea, had a variant or corollary. This was a favourite professor, beloved more or less by most of the girls, but supposed in popular legend to show a marked preference for Gilberte. This sub-subject brought forth a vast deal of wickedness and merriment ; and much was made of a recent

meeting in the Rue Soufflot, during which M. Maréchal detained his interesting pupil, Mlle. Morny, for at least five minutes, in close discussion over a disputed point in the text of the *Winter's Tale.*

By half-past six, having had a long, intimate, momentous meeting, they were beginning, most unwillingly, to think of separation.

"Look here," said Gilberte, tearing the plate of cakes from the last marauders. "Will you go away, in the end, and leave me to work."

"Chérie, we go!" said the marauders all together, with their mouths full. "Jeanne, get off the table. She is tired of us."

"Jacqueline," said Jeanne, "leave her notes alone, which are in any case beyond you. She is tired of us."

"Paulette," said Jacqueline, "tell those two to stop dancing, and leave the poor cat in peace. She is tired of us."

"We are an hour already longer than we said," said Paulette, "and our husbands are waiting for dinner. Tenez!"—there was a knock at Gilberte's door—"they have come in anger to fetch us!"

A giggle preluded the opening of the door. At the appearance of Alexander, tall and grave in the entry, a younger girl collapsed palpitating on the shoulder of the wit who had spoken.

"Never—and the mioche as well," said Paulette; but it fell unnoticed by the majority, for at the

sight of the child there was a general and marked stir of interest in the feminine community.

" Miss Morny," said Alexander, sticking to his English in shyness, for he had not at all expected so many girls, " I've picked up your nephew outside. I'm thinking he must have run away." He added in apology, " I'm afraid he is crying."

" Jean ! " ejaculated Gilberte.

" Oh, the dear little rabbit," cried all the tea-party. " Chérie, let us have him instantly."

Alexander's responsibility was finished. He stood, with his hands behind, to laugh, for it was pleasant to see Gilberte's young guests fall as one girl upon the baby. Jacqueline, a stout little fair thing, had him first, crossed the room, staggering, followed by the swarm, and planted herself firmly in the largest chair.

Gilberte's eyes went after them, but she did not move from where she had risen from her seat at Alexander's entrance. She looked very slightly flushed and disturbed over such an untimely conjunction of events ; but her serene manner showed nothing of it, and she availed herself at once of the chance for confidence the general movement among her guests had left her.

" I ought to apologise," said Alexander, more shy than she. " But there was nothing else to do. He tried to tell me about it as we came, but I could not follow him very well. All I can be sure of is that he is terrified to go home. He simply cried each time I mentioned it."

"That woman," Gilberte said mechanically. "Yet what is to be done now? I cannot kidnap him."

"Let me take a message," said Alexander.

"André will come." The girl was speculating aloud. "Mon Dieu, but they deserve the fright." The line of her delicate mouth hardened; her eyes were resting on the child. "Jeanne," she said, "do not overfeed him. He will be sick." Suddenly she lifted her eyes to Alexander. "Let me have him," she said, swift and low—"just for this night. See, the woman will never tell André, unless he asks, which is improbable. She fears to lose her place; she will lie to all—she will pretend. If she torment herself, so much the better, but I do not think it. Besides, is that more than the torments *we* have borne, knowing him misused?"

"You knew?" said Alexander puzzled. "Why in heaven did you not accuse her?"

"Why?" said Gilberte, still with her eyes on Jean's dark head, and Jacqueline's fair one bent above it. "Why is a man a man, you might as soon ask me. Because André is André, and she is a handsome woman, and violent. Is it not natural to you?"

"No," said Alexander.

"Bah, you are English." She waited, still without looking at him. "My mother has spoken," she said; "but André will not attend to her. To me he would attend—but I will not speak.

I will not interfere in that household—no, not even for Jean. My pride, eh ?—before my love."

"That I do understand," said Alexander gently, "English or not."

"You do ?" she said, and for the first time faced him full. He felt he had never seen her so lovely, for he had never seen her moved. "I am in your debt, do you see ?" said Gilberte, with low concentration; "for you have forced me to interfere. The shrew—the fiend—she shall know me." Her little head went back, and her jaw set. "Stay a little," she directed him briefly; and moved forward swiftly to the girls.

In that short time, it seemed, she had spent her emotion: for later, with the child, she was calm. The flock of girls were soon swept out, but Alexander stayed. He tried to go, most dutifully; he rehearsed every stage of taking leave and of departure; but he could not move from the enchanted circle of her hearth. From time to time Gilberte lifted her eyes upon him; but that made things no better. Alexander felt inexplicably lonely—as friendless, as cast out, as Jean himself; and it did him good to see her sitting there. There was something about Gilberte, her careless poses, her easy movements, the completeness of her, whether in speech or silence, which warmed him like an inspiration. He had felt such a glow at heart before, he vaguely felt, over a grand phrase from the Greek, or noble

service, or broad view. She was " fine," Gilberte ; she took that place in heart and brain, perhaps for the first time in his life, unquestioned. There was no questioning her at all, he found ; she just was, and he rejoiced himself by stupid gazing at her, like a dog.

Taking the child from Jacqueline's arms, it had struck Gilberte, like Alexander, that he was cold. It was a chilly night, and Jean, in his childish doubts and wavering, had loitered long in the streets.

" We will have a fire, Jean," she said, and leant to put a match to it. " And after that I shall wash you, my friend, for you are very dirty."

" Non," Jean protested on instinct, though he was sleepy after the food.

" Si !—but you are extremely. Dirty and disobedient, eh ? It is well to be obedient, but better to be clean."

" I promised him a bath." Fergusson broke silence.

" Which was rash of monsieur," said Gilberte ; " for I have no such thing. However, we will do our best with a sponge and basin, if you do not kick. It is well I have on my old dress, isn't it ? "

" I will not kick," said Jean, clasping his dirty hands together ; " for now I am good."

" When you are bad," inquired his aunt, " do you kick her ? No ?—and why not ? "

The child clasped his hands more tightly, wringing them almost, lifting his eyes to her. The embarrassment, fear, and misery caused by a reference to his nurse's name could not have been more clear to witness.

"I meant to wait for the confession until you were clean," said Gilberte, bending the gaze of her clear eyes to him. "But perhaps we had better have it now—hein?" As the child still looked at her troubled, she laid her long hands, palm towards palm, over his. She had the look of a young father confessor. "What is it?" she said. "How did it happen? Do not cry, but tell me."

The child's tears ran over, but after a moment he spoke in gasps. Confused and tired as he was, his voice choked with sobs, his phrases in mingled baby-French and bad English, Alexander could never have understood him; but Gilberte's calm echoes and answers made all clear. Once or twice, as the recital proceeded, she laughed herself, that little laugh he never failed to mark with delight.

"What is it?" he inquired, the first time she did so, leaning forward. "I don't follow him."

"The telephone," said Gilberte, looking round, her face lit up with mirth. "Imagine his thinking of it, all alone, and frightened—the poor lamb! The fiend had locked him in. So he climbed on a chair—hey, Jean?—and rang very,

very loud—ah, but how it must have alarmed the concierge !—and what then ? "

" I talked," said Jean, divided between fear and triumph, and holding tightly on to her wrist. " I said, ' Montez, montez tout-d'-suite,' like maman when the water came through the ceiling. And he heard—and he came up—and he unlocked it."

" Did you say thank you ? " said his aunt solemnly.

" Oh no," said Jean, his round eyes fixing her. " I am afraid of M. Grammont, and he does not hear well. When he opened I just went upstairs as quick as I could to Marguerite."

" Who is Marguerite ? " said Alexander.

" She is au sixième," Jean explained ; " and she and Marie-Louise have a doll together. Marguerite has it at night, because she minds the dark. Sometimes they let me look at it with them. N—not now," he added, after a painful pause ; " but sometimes they did."

" Did you not find Marguerite au sixième ? " Gilberte inquired, drawing him closer. She had abandoned the stern confessor's attitude as the account proceeded.

" No, they were not there. I couldn't reach the bell. I hit the door hard—but I heard nothing inside." Jean gulped. How could he explain to these old people the tragedy of that silence, and of finding himself alone on the twilit stairs ? Only gulps in the throat could

express it, and the trembling clutch of his little hands. "I thought she might have gone into the gardens perhaps," he went on rather faintly, as neither his aunt nor the Englishman had any comment.

"So you went out to find her?"

"Y—yes."

"Did the concierge see you?"

Jean did not think any one had seen him, but he had plainly not reflected on the question at the time. He was getting tired, and Gilberte ceased further inquiry. She considered, her pointed chin resting on his close-cropped head in the firelight, for the flames were now leaping gaily in the half-dark room. Her whole attitude spoke to Alexander of jealous possession. Jean, in the warmth and safety of her arms, was beginning to feel sleepy. He, at least, as was evident, had no expectation or desire of moving further that evening. He had found what he had been vaguely seeking for hours past—found it by no greater miracle than those which determine every commonplace in the existence of a child. Jean was very well content to forget Meess Nurse, and the terrors of a possible to-morrow, to enjoy the moment, and, if kind Fate so willed it, to dream of the bears in the Jardin des Plantes.

Alexander looked on, his head supported on his hand, so still that Gilberte in her reverie actually forgot his existence. When she re-

membered it, she turned with a sudden movement like a start, and almost immediately rose.

"I must take him to bed," she said, "clean or not. He shall sleep with me, n'est-ce-pas, my beloved? Say good-night to this English gentleman."

Alexander took the child's little hand in his, for Jean was too drowsy to seek for the necessary words. He had risen to face her, for he saw his dismissal plainly in the motion she had made. Indeed, he suspected that there was no other room but the one he stood in, cunningly disguised from all semblance of a bedchamber though it was. In that minute past a change had come over it and her, and he felt himself the intruder.

"There is nothing more I can do?" he said, and his eyes met hers and lingered.

"Nothing," she answered almost resentfully, as though guessing the commission he expected to be given. Was it this indignation, he wondered, or the firelight, or something else that flushed her as she spoke? "It is my affair, monsieur; I take it upon myself."

He bowed his head. "I do nothing, then."

"Nothing. Yet wait," she added quickly, as though recollecting. "Do you go to the concert this evening?—Ania Tschernoff's," she added, seeing the embarrassment in his eyes.

"Ah yes; I am going," said Alexander, though he had not thought of it till that moment.

" It is near here," said Gilberte, " and I half promised Paul. If you should see him, will you say I was detained ? "

" No reason ? "

" I am working." Again the quick melting of all her features into mirth. " That will vex Paul, for he should be working also. Our épreuves begin the same day, and soon ! Thus I steal a march on him."

" You have the best possible excuse."

" Our common excuse, hein ? " She gathered in the half-sleeping child. Fergusson saw, without being conscious of noticing, how easily, buoyantly, she stood, with that weight upon her. This young student's muscles were in order, at least. Every line of her body showed health and freedom, though her face in repose was tired. And what steady sense and sweetness in her gaze : no words could say how Alexander longed to lay the whole burden of his troubles before her. Would not the mere expression of them before such a counsellor be relief ?

" Mademoiselle Gilberte,"—he stopped on the name, which now first crossed his lips.

" Monsieur ? "

" May I come to see you—I mean, for news of Jean—to-morrow ? " His tone meant more than his words.

" I am working," she said, after a slight pause, gravely.

" Sunday ? " said Alexander, all the supplica-

tion a man may offer in his eyes. He almost held his breath while she regarded and judged him.

"Sunday at five," she said; and sparing a hand from her burden, she offered it.

Their hands met thus, for the second time.

XII

ALEXANDER went down the stairs, and issued, past the concierge, whose face he knew, upon a new world without. He shook off his worry and squared his shoulders. Everything in dull life and the dull street showed brighter; things must be better in a world that held Gilberte. He decided to vex himself no more to-night at least, and dined alone at a restaurant of the quarter, to be near her; and also to be near the concert to which she sent him, for it was already after eight o'clock.

Alexander, in a modest way, was fond of music, though he did not talk much of such things. He knew what he liked very well, though he was not good at giving reasons. He had long made the discovery that it is easier to say what is "fine" in a tragedy or a cathedral, than what is "fine" in the simplest song. Some of his Scottish tunes he held to be so, and might perhaps be forgiven for finding no other native music quite to match them. But he was wide-minded enough to recognise other inspirations, even when they came less naturally home to his heart; and he was

both touched and thrilled to hear Ania Tschernoff sing her peasant melodies. She gave other music too, but he liked and understood her best in these. Her short little sulky face grew ennobled, seemed changed to wistfulness and beauty, as she sang them. He had heard much gossip in the quarter of the Russian colony, and of the Tschernoffs in particular; but it struck him watching anew, how these voluntary exiles loved their home. Ania must, to look like that. Her demeanour in public showed the same astonishing ease and maturity he had remarked on first seeing her in Avery's studio; though, reason as he would, he could not put her age above seventeen. To-night the splendid braids of hair he remembered were tucked out of sight, for she wore a quaint peasant's costume with vivid, savage-looking embroideries, and a cap or kerchief round her head. All the performers in the dusky little hall were of her own nationality, and at least one-half of the audience. The programme and its rendering also were on a high level of excellence; but what pleased and amused Alexander most was the enthusiasm among the spectators. It was nearly exclusively a students' concert, and there was great friendliness and bonhomie—a sort of personal sympathy—between the platform and the listeners on the benches. Alexander had found a seat in a dark little gallery at the end of the small hall the students' society had hired for the festival;

and from his lofty perch there he looked down with interest at the recurrent tumults beneath him. Criticism was rife around him too, chiefly in French and Russian-French, but now and then in other accents he could not guess or determine.

In the middle of the concert there was an interval, and Alexander made use of it to try to discover whether Paul Morny was present in the room. His gallery projected a little, and being in the front row, he stood up to peer down into the body of the hall, and search the ranks beneath him. It was while he was so engaged that he became aware of a conversation behind him, and was awakened to full attention by the sound of Gilberte's name.

The shock the name sent through him, thus suddenly heard on a stranger's lips, was surprising to himself. He had not been conscious of weaving it industriously at every moment with the music he heard, nor did he recognise his shock as that received when one's innermost thoughts are spoken aloud. Alexander, wise as he was, was singularly ignorant of himself. He had no conception of what was happening within him, nor had he awakened to the necessity of setting his brain to keep pace with those new movements of his life. Yet now, on hearing her name, he was so aware of his inner disturbance and excitement, as to ask himself seriously what he had been drinking lately when he dined.

His memory acquitted him of anything even remotely intoxicant, and he could only suppose it was the effect of the insidiously emotional music of the East. When his pulses grew steady, he was listening closely, though his eyes still sought mechanically for Morny among the heads below.

The worst of it was, that, try as he would, he could not exactly follow the sense of what was said. The chief talker certainly spoke French, but a French of the boulevards, that, for all Fergusson's eager attention, continually baffled his understanding. The manner of the group, their laughter, all he could follow of their dialogue fired his suspicion, but no more. He waited, palpitating with a singular agitation, for another name which he thought he had caught at the beginning of their chatter, but it was not repeated. Scandal was flourishing as usual on anonymity and innuendo—if scandal was there at all; for might they not have used Ledru's name solely by way of identifying her, or of aiding a quite inoffensive story?

Never, perhaps, was an excited young man in a more miserable position than Alexander. It was not so much that he feared to make himself absurd by turning to rend them, as that he was actually in doubt whether he had any right to attack at all. Half a dozen times he told himself he would risk it, and at all hazards stop this profane bandying of her name; as many

times in sheer justice he desisted for lack of proof. By way of gaining evidence, he once turned carelessly about and shot a glance at the speaker. Lance Avery would have known him, for it was the young man he had once treated to lunch and gossip after a morning with the red-haired nurse in the Jardin des Plantes. But to Alexander he was completely unknown, and the fixed slight smile he wore in converse proved nothing definite against him.

Alexander turned back in despair and picked up his hat and stick, for he felt he could not stay there in such torment any longer. At the moment, he saw the very man he had been seeking enter the half empty gallery and approach him.

"Ah, Fergusson," said Morny, with an odd keen look; and pushing along the vacant bench, sat down near to him.

"I should like two words with you," he was beginning, when he stopped short. His ear also had been caught by the dialogue behind.

"Tschk, what is this?" he murmured, as though addressing his neighbour. Alexander said nothing, and sat like a log. Paul remained with his head bent a moment longer, his eye carelessly skimming the lower hall. Alexander actually wondered if he had forgotten something, or was looking for a friend. Meanwhile the interesting conversation behind was finishing, and the speaker about to move outside, whither

the greater part of the gallery's occupants had strolled to smoke. Paul turned then, and Alexander prepared to address him, but the young man had a curious air of disregarding him.

"You will pardon me," he said politely, leaning back as far as one hand on the gallery rail would allow him, and directing his gaze past Alexander's shoulder. "May I be assured of what person you were speaking lately?"

Such was the carelessness of his manner that somebody, not the storyteller, informed him.

"Mlle. Morny."

"I thought I could not be mistaken," said Paul. "Mlle. Gilberte, is it not?"

"Have you anything to add to the account?" said the narrator, turning back at this uncalled-for interposition. He looked hard at Paul, whose back was to the light.

"Nothing for the present," said that gentleman in a cordial tone, still to the other man, "except that it is a cursed lie."

There was a visible movement of interest along both benches, which were just beginning to fill again. The man he was so careful not to address paled rather, having determined on examination who he was; but he kept his dignity.

"Ha!" he said. "And for the present monsieur deprives us of his reasons for the correction."

"Not at all," said Paul. "But I should be sorry to deprive myself and you of the next

morceau, which is the best on the programme—and there is the bell. When that is over I shall be happy to give you my reasons outside, and anybody else who wishes."

He turned back to the hall as the music began, and sat with his chin supported on his folded arms on the rails, to all appearance enjoying his circumstances immensely, and thinking of nobody in the world but the singer, unless, with a vague satisfaction, of himself.

Alexander, however, had no such consolations. He did not wait to see the end of the incident; indeed he had no need, for though he retreated himself at the earliest opportunity, he noticed that the conversational young man left before him. Walking home by moonlight he relentlessly reviewed the figure he had cut in her brother's eyes—before long, doubtless, in her own. If the reproof had been directed to himself, he could not have felt more humiliated. It had touched her honour, and he had let her brother be before him. He had failed her in the plainest service—yes, even her message he had neglected to deliver in his hurried retreat from the scene the Frenchmen had appeared to relish so much. The tumult made about the business was to him as jarring and hateful as the scandal itself. It would only serve to make the talk richer afterwards among a lot of vulgar young men. Not that he exactly classed Paul Morny as vulgar; only he could see him throughout enjoying a dramatic appearance

and a lively situation, where Alexander himself would have been merely sick with disgust. He had no wish to see Paul or to talk with him for the moment, until he had to some extent cleansed and tranquillised his mind.

It is noticeable that a side-section of his disgust was, no doubt, that his hands had been tied through sheer ignorance. Not once but many times during the period of his sojourn in this brilliant terrible city, his ignorance of the idiom commonly exchanged about him had awakened this revolt. That practical annoyance was only brought home to him the more bitterly now, that the ignorance was a bar between him and the woman whom his best instincts strained to approach.

Thus Mr. Fergusson, crossing the Quartier Latin by moonlight, in his general weariness and dissatisfaction with the universe, for the first time cursed his education.

There are some days that hold the events of a lifetime, and his perturbations were even yet not over for the night. The final touch to them was waiting upon his work-table at home, in the form of the familiar blue envelope of the pneumatic message. He did not know the handwriting, and on looking at the signature he recognised it with surprise as that of the man he had left at the concert, Gilberte's brother. What could Morny have to say to him? He remembered

suddenly Paul's queer look at him lately, when he first appeared in the gallery.

The style of the note was curt enough, but it showed an interest in his affairs that astonished Alexander, who clung strongly to a native habit of regarding his affairs as his exclusive property.

"Miss Lampeter, as you doubtless know, was of our party this afternoon," wrote Paul. "In your absence I had the honour of taking her home. I would not disquiet you, but there was a wind on the water returning, and though we managed to find her a wrap, I fear she has felt the cold. She was home before eight o'clock, for I persuaded her to retire soon on every account.

"You will understand that I wish by writing thus to avoid further interference."

Alexander's new shock was that of presentiment fulfilled. He had not an instant's doubt as to the bearing of that diplomatic "our." Meysie had deserted him on her own account for Avery, and had not, perhaps, found even the satisfaction she expected. Alexander read the last sentence but one, several times over. He had a feeling, in this writing, of meeting a wit at least as keen as his own. Without committing himself to interference, Morny conveyed all he wished. Meysie, his charge, Mrs. Lampeter's delicate lamb, had suffered otherwise than by the wind's chill, though that was serious enough. What had Meysie done, or attempted to do?

He knew well that in excitement or wounded vanity she was capable of much.

His hatred for Lance flared suddenly, and dropped again, dead. In the meeting and turmoil of the two waves of feeling aroused that evening within him, emotion itself was dulled. He felt fatalist, languid even. His first impulse to go straight to the girl had to be abandoned on a glance at the clock. Instead, he stared long before him, digging his pencil into the holes of the wooden table on which his papers and books lay scattered.

It was fully two o'clock before it occurred to him that he might be tired, and that he would have to see Meysie as early as possible the following morning. He repeated steadily to himself the necessity for this interview through the watches of the night; for, reflecting at length and wretchedly, he found that he dreaded it, that the unknown demon of languor within him even disclaimed the necessity.

Later, heavenly Reason awoke and spoke to Alexander vividly in a waking dream. Roused with an effort to the first morning light, he found that it was no reason at all, but foolishness, and fought it down. That voice had said to him—if he had the explanation with Meysie, what excuse would be left him for an interview with Gilberte?

XIII

PAUL MORNY informed Ania Tschernoff at the end of the concert that he was the slave of duty. The fact is worth mention, because not even his dearest friends had ever called him this before. He made the remark by way of excuse to the Russian girl for not taking her and her sister, as he had intended, out to supper. He might have seemed whimsical and annoying to many people as he offered his excuse with an air of conviction, but Ania was used to him. She was also one of his few confidantes in the matter of his ambitions in the approaching examination—and he looked particularly handsome and self-satisfied as he spoke. Thus Ania would have been inclined to be gentle with him, even had she not had a recent triumph to soften her.

"What form does the duty take to-night?" she inquired.

"Family duty," said Paul proudly.

"Blague," said Ania. "Unless," she added as an afterthought, "your family means yourself."

"Not at all," he assured her. "If I told you

how I had worked already to-day for my family, you would be astonished."

"So would they, I imagine," said Ania.

"I am going now," said Paul, "to supper with my brother-in-law."

"Good heavens," said Ania, "I thought you detested him."

"On the contrary," said Paul, "I approve André—at a distance. It is true I have only spoken to him twice in three years, but on those occasions I was exquisitely polite."

"I see," said Ania, who, perched on a table in her peasant's costume, with the flush of success on her high cheek-bones, made a very attractive little figure. "So you go to be polite for the third time, this evening."

"I go this evening for the first time," said Paul, "to tell him he is a fool."

"Is that all?" said Ania.

"I may then—if habits of courtesy overcome me—inquire after my nephew."

"Tiens," said Ania, "have you a nephew, then? I have never seen him."

"I have seen him twice since his birth," said Paul. "Jeanne was a careful mother. I believe I am his godfather," he added suddenly.

"I am sure you are not," said Ania. "You are not old enough."

Paul paused, and studied her. "You look like your own grandmother," he remarked, "in that cap. Yet I doubt if you ought to be up so late."

"Since you refuse me supper," retorted she, "I dare say I had better go home to bed."

"You had far better," agreed Paul, "for then you will have supper with no one else."

She smiled at him very slightly, with a hint of the roguishness of a childhood she had barely known. He caught her hand instantly, and held it between his. The girl's head drooped; she bit her lip with her fine white teeth, as she glanced under her eyelids towards Marie, who stood nearer the door, half-stemming, half-receiving the tide of congratulation. Marie, her sister knew, despised the young medical student, but Ania found him sometimes very charming—with an earthly charm, truly, but one which came as a comforting change from the lofty impersonal passions amid which, with Marie, it was one's fate to live.

"Family duties," she reminded him softly. "And know that I have them also."

"You have none," Morny answered on the instant, pressing closer to her.

"Ah, have I not? Have you not heard how *she* would count a family?" She nodded sidelong to her sister, though her eyes were on him. "Has she never spoken to you of our life—of the opinions we hold?"

"*We*," he gibed. "It is *your* opinion that matters."

"Not yet." The girl's eyes lowered.

"Soon," he said. "When I see you next,

perhaps. I may tell you I have a point of view, as well as Marie. May I show it you—and soon, Ania ? "

She drew her hand lightly from him, with the graceful ease of twice her age. " Perhaps," she said. " After the examination, hein ? " And she leapt from the table.

. . . . . .

Paul departed with a light step about his next piece of business. He had really done a good day's work, he reassured himself on the way—settling the affairs in succession of no less than four females, which gave him a feeling of great age and experience. There was Miss Lampeter, poor little simpleton ; there was Gilberte, a mere passing episode ; there was Ania, he trusted not a passing episode at all ; and there now remained the last lady, as to whom he promised himself some entertainment.

He walked along the windy streets, whistling to himself Ania's final song, which was his favourite, and led by recollection of the music and her face into very pleasant paths of thought. As for the little scene he was about to face, he did not disturb himself to prepare its details. Such things arranged themselves most happily, he had often found, if left alone.

He was approaching the door of the mansion where his brother-in-law lived, on the other side of the way, when he paused suddenly. The figure of a woman was whisking along on the

opposite pavement, also, as it became evident, making for the same house. Little was to be seen of her but that she carried herself well, and that the silhouette of her elegant form included the long swirl of a fashionable skirt, and the plumes, billowing in the gusts of wind, of a veiled hat.

" Bon," said M. Morny to himself in the shadow opposite. " And you thought I should not remember you, hey? Mount then, Madame Ruby. Ladies first."

After a discreet interval he crossed the road, and inquired of the concierge's wife if Monsieur Ledru had returned.

" Mon Dieu, no, monsieur," said the woman. " He is often late."

" Really ? " said Paul, who was inclined to linger, in order to give the lady-nurse, not to mention André, the time to arrive. " That disturbs the family, eh ? "

" He has but one," said the concierge's wife.

" I alluded to yours," said Paul agreeably. " Your little girl appears to be awake." Indeed, the concierge's little girl, inadequately clothed, was peeping behind her skirts.

" Ah, yes, the poor angel," sighed the woman.

" M. Ledru's is about her age, perhaps."

" A little younger, monsieur."

" And, having no mother, not so well looked after."

" Monsieur is right," said madame with

emphasis. "The woman they have up there is a disgrace. There is hardly a day when we do not hear it crying."

"Dear, dear," said Paul, with a stranger's careless interest. "No wonder, then, my poor Ledru remains abroad. A crying child is the devil."

"The devil is certainly concerned in it, monsieur," said the concierge's wife, who hated Meess Nurse, because she was so well dressed. "Fortunately the other locataires take pity on the poor little one. Only to-day, I may tell you, my husband——"

Her confidences were cut short by a ring.

"There he is, M. Ledru," she observed, and opened the door.

André came bustling in, rubicund and cheerful. He had plainly had a pleasant evening, and nodded kindly to madame. At the stranger's movement towards him he stopped in some surprise, and only upon an adjustment of his neat eyeglass recognised Paul. Why Paul should choose to visit him at eleven o'clock André had no idea; he was pleased enough to see him, however, for he was a sociable little man, although his subjects of conversation were limited. These could, in fact, be easily reduced to two; and under the first of the heads, he began even as they ascended the stairs to give Paul an account of the dinner he had recently enjoyed at a well-known restaurant.

" I have had nothing like it," he said pensively of one of the dishes, " since that dinner à quatre we had a month after my marriage, with little Gilberte and poor Jeanne."

" I should have thought," said Paul, doing his sister justice, " that Jeanne herself was capable of giving you as good."

" Jeanne was not bad," said André in a melancholy tone. " Not bad, no. Gilberte is not bad either. There is nothing like the pure tradition for pastry, and your mother assures me they have it both."

The tense he used left it to be supposed that Jeanne preserved the pure tradition for pastry in the better world to which she had retreated.

They had by now entered the flat, and André made for the small library his careful wife had furnished for him, which now no longer preserved the orderly smartness of its early days.

" Hmph," said André, sniffing with a little suspicious air. " It would seem a candle has been extinguished lately. Ah, ah, mon cher, these households." He assumed an air of great responsibility.

Paul said nothing and smiled. He had taken it upon himself to open the outer door rather suddenly, and he had even heard the swish of silken skirts retiring down the side-passage. He settled comfortably in a chair by the hearth, accepted a glass, and felt for a cigarette.

" Jean will be in bed," he suggested as he did so.

"I suppose so," said André, who had very vague ideas as to when children of five were put to bed. He was accustomed to having Jean whenever he asked for him. He had even had him out of bed before now, finding it amusing to play with him in undress, and conquer his sleepiness with loud jesting, teasing questions, and sips of wine. André was proud of Jean in his domestic moods, and he began to boast to Paul of these proceedings, and certain precocious remarks of his son.

Paul was politely entertained, though a little absent.

"All that is at an end now, I suppose," he said presently.

"At an end?" said André. "Why?"

"Since this fine Englishwoman's arrival. Oh, I have heard of her." His humorous eyes rested on his brother's face.

"And what have you heard?" said André, ruffling visibly.

"Your life, mon pauvre vieux," said Paul deliberately, "is no longer your own. Do not blush—it is public property."

"Pish, you young fellows," said André, frowning, but not ill-pleased apparently. "What, I ask, will you say next? Yet I will not allow her to be misjudged." He assumed a protecting air. "I tell you, Paul, though English, of course, she is a very good girl."

"Does what she is told, eh?" said Paul.

" To be sure," said the little man, stirred again. " I am master in my own house."

Paul laughed, shaking his head slowly.

" Ah, I have seen her," he said. " I have even studied her a little, and I know a temper when I see it. See now, how many servants have you dismissed since she arrived? And owing in each case to whose complaint? "

" You have been listening to your mother's gossip," said André with dignity.

" Pardon, I never listen," said Paul. " I believe my own eyes."

" And how do you do that, when you are never here? "

" I meet her abroad," said Paul modestly.

" Abroad? " A pause. " With the child, you mean."

" With—and without," said Paul.

" When have you met her without? "

" To-day."

" To-day? I never gave her permission——"

" No," said Paul. " That is what I say. " For all *you* know, she may be eloping with a junior député to-night."

André looked at him a minute. His ruddy face had lost its evening look of festivity, and bore the business lines of the morning. After a pause he laid down his cigar, and stepping to the door, opened it and called briskly down the passage, " Meess Ruby."

There was no answer or movement. A blank

and deathlike silence reigned over the dark passage and the rooms adjoining

"She is asleep, poor girl," said André, but uncertainly. His eyes were on the candle in the vestibule, whose scent still lingered in the air.

"She is not there," said Paul.

"What object have you——" began André, turning, and then turning back, advanced a little and called again. This time his voice had the true ring of authority and a note beyond. It also had its effect. With a swift swirl of skirts that made the master of the house retreat in sheer surprise, Meess Nurse was upon them. André at her appearance retreated still further, and took refuge, with almost unseemly haste, by his young brother-in-law on the hearth.

Indeed, Meess Nurse's appearance was unusual.

She had not had the time to change her gala dress, except that a hasty hand had torn open some of its fastenings near the throat. But for this slight disorder she was, like the mother of Athalie, "pompeusement parée." The scrap from his schooldays came back to Paul as he looked upon her with satirical approval. Avery had dressed her with an artist's instinct in line, fabric, and colour. Her dress, which was costly and admirably cut, was of a thick lustreless silk in a shade of copper-brown, throwing up to perfection the tints of her skin and the rich lights on her hair. The artist had bought her to wear at her belt a bunch of the mauve-pink

Alpine cyclamen mixed with their ruddy foliage; and Miss Ruby had added on her own account some necklaces of sham pearl and thick coral. She had thrown off her hat in evident haste, and her hair was a mass of gleaming disorder about her low brow.

Thus standing before them, she was a sight to take man's breath, but there was that in her face which diverted attention even from her natural and borrowed splendours. Her face was haggard, in startling contrast with the lips she had tinted carefully to match the coral beads, and she was shaking visibly from head to foot in mingled fear and rage.

André Ledru stood utterly aghast before the vision; and Paul himself sat up in surprise and new attention. Miss Ruby had fixed him instantly upon her entrance.

"It's you, is it?" she said, speaking English in her haste and fury. "And so this is your little game."

"I came in with my brother," said Paul.

"Don't talk to me," said Meess Nurse. "You were here before me. Do you think I don't know your goings-on? Where's the child?"

Paul stared at her a second, and the situation flashed upon him. He rose to his feet.

"What does she say?" said Ledru, in a fever of agitation and annoyance. "What does she say? For heaven's sake, Paul, tell me what it is."

"The child is lost," said Morny briefly. "Steady, André. This is more serious than I thought."

"Lost?" the father ejaculated. "Good heavens, the baggage has killed him." His voice was half-strangled, and he advanced on her, looking dangerous.

"Psst," said Paul, "be quiet. We must have the rights of this." He did his best to gather his faculties, but even he was a little bewildered by such a recurrence of dramas on one evening. He turned on the woman.

"Tell us at once. Where and when did you leave him?"

"What did you mean by going out at all?" cried André.

"Ah," the younger man ejaculated, "leave that for now. She did go out, as I happen to know, from two o'clock until half an hour ago."

"She leaves me to-morrow," said André.

"Doubtless," said Morny. "But she does not leave without producing the boy, I suppose."

"I tell you I locked him in," she cried.

"Locked? Which door?"

"The outer."

"You looked in all the rooms?"

"Except here. I went round before you came."

"Enjoying yourself, no doubt," observed Paul grimly. "And we interrupted you, eh? Well"—

he raised the lamp—" there is no harm in looking again."

The two men, followed by the cowering woman, went methodically through every room of the flat, for the two servants slept upstairs, and proved in less than ten minutes that no child was inside it. Morny in addition glanced sharply at the windows, and tried them with his hand; but all were closely fastened, though the blinds were up and the shutters still open, proving that no servant had since the afternoon made the rounds.

" What has happened, then? What have you done with him? " said André, distracted, glaring at the girl, whom he still suspected apparently of the malpractice of romance.

" He cried, of course," Paul said shortly, setting the lamp down again in the vestibule, " and one of the neighbours heard him and opened. Ah——!" he suddenly remembered the broken confidence of the concierge. " Stay here an instant, André," he said. " I will inquire below."

Ledru in his helplessness was following, when a gesture of meaning from Paul recalled to his confused mind the necessity of watching the woman, who sat now looking on at their proceedings with a demeanour half sullen, half insolent.

So André stayed, and finding himself face to face with her, made the best of his opportunity. Miss Ruby discovered in the next half-hour, not

a little to her surprise, the distinction between André the shy little master of a household, and André the man of affairs, whose property had been mishandled. He had the shaken woman at his mercy, and kept her there till Paul came back.

Paul, alone to act, wasted no time. The concierge was examined, and, late as it was, the house was scoured from top to bottom. Marguerite's mother, in curl-papers and a shabby dressing-gown, came right out on the staircase wringing her hands, but she could give no news of Jean. They had been out, she explained, all of them, to Chantilly for the day. The appartement had been locked, no key even left beneath the mat where "that little one, so intelligent, so malign," might have discovered it. The locataires on other floors, indignant at being disturbed, offered no better solution. There was no further question to the minds of the seekers—Jean must have gone out of doors.

It was not long after this that Meess Nurse, still sulky and furious, was locked into her bedroom, as her victim had been once before, and her master and Morny went out, hot upon the search, in different directions.

The father had taken the course of reason to the police-office; so the young uncle was left to his instincts. It was doubtless either instinct, or some old habit in perplexity, that took Paul for counsel to his sister's lodging.

Although it was now past midnight, Gilberte was still dressed and up when he arrived. She seemed to be at work, her back towards him entering, her head resting on her hand close to the little lamp.

"I come from André," her brother began. Then he stopped, more than a little disconcerted; for, as her head turned towards him, he saw she had been weeping.

"And what then, if you please?" she said.

Her brother paused again, being quite taken aback by her almost stern look and manner of speech.

"You are distressed?" he queried awkwardly. "Perhaps I should not have disturbed you so late. It is a question of the child. He has been missed from home."

"Ah," said Gilberte. "And who missed him?"

Paul stopped anew, openmouthed. He had to admit, "la petite" was not at all like herself. He did not reply directly to her question, which might indeed have been troublesome to answer.

"André is anxious," he said brusquely. "Is he here?"

"What if he is?" said Gilberte.

"My dear girl," said Paul, and advanced a step. "Have you lost your wits to-night?" Her look in response baffled him. "At least," he said, after a dubious pause, "I may reassure André."

" If you think he deserves to be reassured."

" He has suffered," said Paul.

" Perhaps, now," said Gilberte. " And how long has Jean suffered, I ask you ? "

Paul regarded her, biting his lip. " You cannot keep him, Gilberte," he said.

" Why not ? "

" To say the least, it does not look well. If I told you what I heard to-night——"

" Well ? " She turned a little more to face him full. The young man's eyes fell before hers.

" He—he will not repeat it," he admitted.

" I thank you, my brother," she said, still quite coldly. " Now, will you leave me—because——"

As her head sank down on her hands again, Paul went suddenly forward to her side.

" My little one," he said, " you have worked too much. This is nerves, simply, let me tell you."

" Cure me then," she sobbed. Paul put his arm about her shoulders.

" I have not yet studied the subject in all its branches," he observed.

She half laughed through her tears. " No," she said, " I do not think you have."

" Will you not tell me what it is ? " said Paul, who did not for an instant believe it was from nerves she was suffering. She was not that kind of girl.

" No," Gilberte said again. " Not now, at

least. You have to go, and—and reassure André." But her head was against his shoulder, as though she found some consolation in his presence.

"You are reading nothing too exacting, I hope," said her mentor, moving her hand aside to glance at the page. "Mon Dieu, it is the English poet-lord. He at least is blameless."

Gilberte's dark eyes dropped to the open book. She did not altogether acquit Tennyson on the present occasion, but had she said so, Paul could never have understood.

"'Let no one dream,'" he spelt in his comical accent, "'but that I love thee still.' Dear me, what had the lady done?"

"She admired another man," said Gilberte.

"He seems to be forgiving her," said Paul, having read a little more with a face expressively twisted.

"Yes," said Gilberte. "They always forgive, those. And they never love but once, mon frère."

"You know all about it," he laughed.

"It is my lesson for to-night. Go." She shut the book, rose, and took up the lamp.

Paul prepared to retreat. "Let me see the little one," he suggested on his way to the door, "then I can the better convince André."

She hesitated, and glanced aside. "He is here."

The little lamp, in its new position, illumined

the further corner of the room, where on the couch now transformed into a bed, Jean was asleep. Wearied out, he was sleeping profoundly, lapped in the last Elysium of the tired child. He was clean as he had not been for months past, owing to his aunt's attentions, and his two little hands were clenched close to his chin in an unconscious attitude that suggested to the onlooker self-defence.

Gilberte touched his hair. "He carries the marks of cruelty," she murmured.

"She goes to-morrow," said Paul, hushing his voice also, in respect for the genius of sleep.

"When she has gone, I return him to André."

"Am I to tell him that?"

"Yes."

Paul refrained from comment, and looked down again.

"He has taken all your bed," he suggested.

"There will be room enough for us both," said Gilberte. Her look on the sleeping child was lovely. Her brother seized and embraced her suddenly.

"When I see you with one of our own——" he muttered, and went away without finishing.

XIV

ALEXANDER had a note the following morning. "Come at once, Meysie;" but it did not need that summons to send him early about his duty to the pension. He was shown into the minute salon, and found Agatha Wheeler alone.

"I'm real glad to see you, Mr. Fergusson," said Agatha, marking the place in her book and setting it down. "For mamma's ill too, and I'm harassed between them."

"I am sorry for it," said Alexander, who liked her.

"I knew," Agatha continued, "that, one way or another, the concert would be too much for mamma; and sure enough, she's in bed to-day, though it needs main force to keep her there. She says she cannot exert her will in a recumbent position."

Alexander murmured something in the pause, and Miss Wheeler pursued.

"However, for you, mamma is not to the point. No, excuse *me*, it's Meysie you are concerned with. And I just hope to goodness you can do something with her, for I cannot."

"What is wrong?" said Alexander.

"Wrong's the word," said Agatha frankly. "She is real miserable, poor Meysie, and feverish, and she is aching to tell about it. She'd as lief as not have told me, but I said it was not my affair. You may think me heartless, and I am sure Meysie does, but I consider there are things every girl must judge for herself, not one for another. She would just get vexed with me if I said out what I thought, and her temperature would go up points. Now, mamma," said Agatha, "is worth ten of me at soothing folks—but there you are; mamma's on the shelf, as I said, so I am just left stranded; and Mr. Fergusson, I depend on you."

"I hope you don't mind doing that," said Alexander. In spite of his anxiety of mind, she amused him.

"To know where to depend is strength, not weakness," said Agatha instantly. "The bother comes when women will depend on something as feeble as themselves."

"I'm much obliged, Miss Wheeler," said Alexander gravely. "I'm pretty sure that's true. Please go to your mother, and leave Meysie to me—if you will just tell her first I am here."

Meysie began by being dignified; but it was from the first doubtful if she would preserve the attitude against the odds of fever and excitement. All Alexander's protecting pity went out

to her anew on seeing her strained and miserable look, but she would not let him approach her in any sense at first, and he had recourse again to his " waiter's " attitude which she had enjoined. She was, as Agatha had suspected, longing for nothing so much as a cry and a confession, like the baby she was ; but she could not quite forget her past superiority, and she watched him suspiciously for signs of the compassion he ventured not to show.

" Why did you get up, my dear ? " said Alexander, with the kindness of a brother. " You have a horrible cold."

" Oh, what do colds matter ? " said Meysie testily. " You don't suppose I had you here to talk about that. Sit down, for goodness' sake, Alec. You are too huge for words, fidgeting about."

" I'll fidget here," said Fergusson, and sat down close to her. As soon as he did so, she turned her head away from him, and shaded her eyes pettishly.

" I can't get that wretched blind to work," she said, " and my eyes ache so after a bad night." Indeed, though no one calling himself a gentleman would have given the point a moment's attention, her eyes had been crying a good deal. So Alexander rose again, and put the persiennes right with a jerk or two, his imperturbable calmness pervading all her atmosphere meanwhile.

"You—you are rather nice," said Meysie, when he had returned. "Now don't talk, for mercy's sake, and I'll see if I can start."

Nothing happened, however, for five minutes at least.

"Suppose I started," said Alexander.

"Don't interrupt," said Meysie instantly. "Well, look here: I suppose you know I went out yesterday."

"Yes."

"How on earth?"

"Morny told me."

"Oh—confound M. Morny."

"I have an idea that's ungrateful," said Alexander.

"It isn't. People like that oughtn't to exist."

"Like what?"

"Conceited—pretty—puppies. All my courage went out of my boots the moment I saw him, and I detested him worse all the afternoon. What *he* wanted—interfering!"

Alexander said nothing.

"Why don't you ask what he interfered with?" said Meysie restlessly. "Tact is sometimes talking, not sitting as glum as a Scotch—idol in a chair. If M. Morny had interfered to the extent of taking up the other Thing, as he only too plainly wanted to do, and—and letting Mr. Avery talk to me, he might have been some use."

"Good," Alexander applauded inwardly, for

though her pale cheek was deeply flushed, she had brought the name out steadily.

"But instead of that——" he helped her gently.

"Instead of that he asked me inane questions about things at home he *could* have had no interest in, and London idiotic museums I knew nothing about; and the—the other two talked together the whole way up, and grew more v-vulgar every minute."

Here ensued a great sob. Alexander moved his hand.

"Don't," flashed Meysie, pulling herself back from him. "Do you suppose I've finished yet? I'm sure it was all her fault, for you had only to hear her laugh to know she was the sort of Person mother would die rather than I saw, and as for her rings and necklaces, they were beastly. But if she f-forced herself upon him, I don't suppose he could help it, because after all he is a gentleman. At least——"

Another fearful pause. At last Meysie, discovering a need to know what Alexander was thinking, slid her eyes sidelong and took a glance. He was absolutely and serenely grave, and seemed really to be studying the position as she presented it, in an impersonal spirit. Relieved anew, she mastered another little sob and dashed on.

"I meant to look so nice, and put on that green crape affair, because he did say he liked it when he painted me. But *she*—oh, he can't have admired

it, no real artist could. Why, I could have told her myself you could only wear the coldest colours with hair like that, and not a tight horror the colour of tomato-soup—and magenta flowers —and a coral necklace—and powdered up to the eyes. I only hope she saw my Contempt," said Meysie; "but I doubt if she noticed me at all. Oh, Alec, what are you smiling at?"

He had smiled at her incorrigible and saving frankness, which spoiled all her points, and kept her young and sweet. But he still said nothing at all, with a feeling that he dared not touch.

"No wonder they could neither of them keep their eyes off her," she continued, looking away again, "nor the other people either."

"What other people?"

"On the boat. I hate those horrible little river boats. I—I thought of course when he asked us he meant a private party. He m—must have heaps of money. I dressed for that. But there we sat with everybody jostling us all the time, and no hope of moving away."

"Was anybody rude to you?" The watch-dog awoke.

"I don't know," said the girl wearily. "I hardly noticed any one but them; except that the whole day was cold and crowded, and everything that happened was wrong, and upside down, and set your teeth on edge. We were a kind of circus show, and—only those two performed.

Every one stared at her, wherever we went. I kept away from them going out, but coming back in the evening he asked me to sit by her—I don't know why—and I did." Still turned aside from him, her face twisted, and the young man clenched his hands.

"You're not smiling now," said Meysie, turning suddenly. "Well, you needn't. I'd l—like to see you. She was worse close—much—and I was no better off, because he whispered to her. Or else he giggled with the Morny man. I don't know really which was worst."

For a minute or two she recovered her breath, which was painfully rapid.

"My green frock's got no collar," she went on, "and the wind was Polar. Mr. Morny kept bothering me to lend me his coat. And *she* said that was the high style in England, and *he* laughed—and after that how could I?"

"You could not," said Alexander.

"Oh, Alec *dear*, don't look like that. . . . As for her, she had sables, which I am sure I hope were her own. I did go to the cabin at last, and that wretched Morny would come after me. I must have looked absolutely blue and hideous, and sh—shivered like a jelly-fish. And to add to all the horrors, if he didn't begin talking medicine, and asking me about my throat, for all the world like mother at her worst. And I was too feeble and futile to get rid of him, though I was rude enough, I should hope, for most people."

"Well?" said Alexander after the next pause. "Isn't that enough?"

"I don't know, I'm sure." She dropped her face in her hands. "I ought to tell you heaps more, of course, only my head is aching so."

"Surely——" said Alexander.

"Be quiet," snapped Meysie. "Can't you let me take breath now and then?"

And she soon went on, as promised, to "tell him more."

Alexander sat motionless, leaning sidelong in his chair, his head—which was also aching, as it happened—propped upon his hand. His eyes were lifted to a corner of the room, where a portrait of Meysie's mother, with a face as young and trustful, and eyes as free of disillusion as her own, hung facing them. He knew that mother well, and constantly saw the daughter through her. He had wondered often to see how she, with this dear and only child in charge, shot easily on the rapids of life, missing the rocks with the luck of ignorance, shyly skirting the deeper backwaters where sorrow and reflection lay. Yet she was a clever woman, whose wit he admired, possessing wide interest in, and power over, the youthful movements of a day strictly no longer hers. Meysie, above all—her path in life, her welfare, all that could even remotely concern her for good or ill—had never been out of her thoughts for long together, during twenty years.

For himself, he had "undertaken" Meysie

open-eyed—seriously as he undertook all things—not oblivious at the outset that there might be much to teach ; and more sure of it as, with the tentative gentleness of those to whom young womanhood is new, he gathered her mind to his. Yet there were things, he modestly thought, that mother of hers should have saved him ; little things of moment—intangible small hints as to the hours when speech is best, or silence necessary, as between woman grown and man ; the eternal reticences, as natural and divine, to his northern cast of thought, as the reticence in nature of the stars ; the occasions where honour shall speak at once, or knowledge for ever keep its counsel.

Yet now, knowing that a word or movement even could have stopped her, a physical languor held him dumbly ; he waited, and Meysie saved him nothing of it all. She was launched at last on the very luxury of confession, and she gave him in intimate detail the history of her faults and feelings; sparing her own weaknesses nowhere, it is true, but sparing his sensitiveness still less ; and (what she never could have realised), binding him to her at every word by the child's artless assumption that this quiet attendant was a second self, born to support her, powerless to judge otherwise than she judged of these interesting pages of her life.

Only once he roused to say—" Do you think you had better tell me this ? "—and she looked

at him in surprise. Otherwise he was, even to her mind, perfect in demeanour—kind and quiet, if rather stiff of tongue.

"As for the pendant," said Meysie, "I have of course sent it back. It is the dreadful way he has of choosing exactly the right thing, and giving it in the right way, just when you are off your guard, that is so mixing to one's mind. He does mix you, you know. He is so fearfully tactful and tasteful and—well—tantalising. I can't explain it better than that, Alec, since you have never known him well, or—or seen his letters. But I can tell you, when I got home last night, I took that pendant off, and looked at it once—it really *was* a pretty one—and packed it up in the original box, without even a note to explain. I did think," said Meysie pensively, "of a very stiff note, but decided against it. I could only have said I couldn't bear him, so I left everything implied. Silence is best, often—isn't it?"

"Often," Alexander agreed. "Is that all now?" His tone was almost cold, for his pride had had much to bear, both in the matter of this recital of her innocent passion for another man, and not less in the fact that she could make it to him. He saw with uncompromising clearness the position he held, and faced it squarely during that hour, while Meysie confessed to him in an astonishing flow of language, and he sat silent to hear it.

Meysie had a momentary shock at his tone; for she was nervous, and hardly her confident self.

"It's enough, I expect," she said, snatching at her dignity. "I dare say you have been longing to go."

"Well," he said slowly, "to tell you the truth, I have."

Meysie gasped, struck cold. Was it Alec speaking? Where was she? What did he mean? In the very midst of the fine exaltation of that hour's confession she saw, though dimly yet, the blank vision rise of her abandonment.

He perceived the doubt, with one of his chance probing glances. A lesser man would have left her in doubt a little; but whether because his own self-question had been so bitter, the struggle so sharp, the decision even now so hardly won, Alexander did not do so.

"For the doctor, May, if you will let me. Don't you see?" he added, very gently.

She did, and one great sob testified relief. In shame, or for concealment, she had turned from him, and put her hands across her face again. He rose then, took her hands from her face by the wrists, and although she resisted feebly, by degrees she had to look at him. Dignity had vanished now; she looked shy and fierce as a little cat.

"Take care what you say," she shot out in

warning. "It's very d—dangerous to talk to me now."

"Right," said Alexander. "Then I have got no choice, have I? You don't mind, dear?"

And he kissed her tear-stained cheek.

Paul Morny avoided seeing his neighbour, Mr. Avery, with great care for the whole of Friday, having the best excuse, for Lance himself was clearly sulking. On Saturday morning he was warned by the unquenchable tones of a female tongue that things were not going smoothly at the model's last sitting. Paul was divided between diverted curiosity and quite genuine disgust. Since the party to St. Cloud he had felt sincerely tired of Lance and his ways, and was ready to break the acquaintance; none the less, his own part of intermediary in a neat situation amused him, and he was not averse to hearing the dénoûment of Miss Ruby's little drama.

That the lady was abusing him, and most bitterly, he had not the least doubt; but he doubted if Lance would think the worse of him for it, or would trouble to betray to the angry girl that she might be overheard by the subject of her strictures. He gathered, though he kept his door closed for prudence' sake, that the interview ended in a rupture, for the sitting was curtailed, and Miss Ruby, in a state of strangled fury, departed down the stairs. Quite soon after, as Paul half expected, Lance, rather flushed,

with a face of boyish injury, came across the passage to confide and complain. Paul did not refuse to hear his complaints, though they did not meet with much response or sympathy.

"What does the girl expect?" said Lance. "I can't be bothered with her little affairs. It's nothing to do with me. I had enough of her on Thursday night; but this is worse. She says you had a hand in it, hey? Confound you all, why couldn't you keep her out of rows, till I had done my duchess?"

"Has she gone?" said Morny.

"Lord knows. She thinks so. I paid her off finally, to keep her quiet, but she bounced about more than ever, though I promised I'd give her ten francs extra to keep her arm still. I shan't find such an arm on another woman," complained Lance.

"Where's she gone to?" said Paul.

Mr. Avery shrugged, pouting youthfully at the window.

"To the devil," the Frenchman suggested, "for all you care?"

"If I thought 'chez the devil' would find her," said Avery, "hanged if I wouldn't write and offer twenty francs for as many minutes' pose. Twenty minutes at full stretch would do. It's too bad."

Morny studied his back a minute.

"Is she in love with you?" he said suddenly. The painter gave him one glance.

"If she cared a rap for me really, she'd sit

properly. That," said Lance, "is what they can't see, these girls."

"It's happened before, then," said Paul, irresistibly amused, as Avery never failed to amuse him, for all his annoying heartlessness.

"Umph," he grunted. Suddenly, twisting his moustache, he resumed the debonair. "But I've finished without 'em before," he cried, "and I will again. After all, in creating 'em, the Almighty finished off every woman without assistance from others, didn't He?"

Paul laughed.

"The modesty of the comparison strikes me as characteristic," he explained.

"Modest rubbish," said Lance. "Isn't it likely I know better than anybody what my work is worth?"

"And its defects," suggested Paul.

"What would you have, in a beastly ugly world? Defects are catching," said Avery, leaning upon his friend's chair in growing good humour.

"Just so. In short, the duchess will be unmoved by her model's desertion."

"Unmoved? She'll be the better for it." Lance, now showing his customary gay face, slapped him on the back. "All the better, mon bon vieux, and a gone thing for the Salon. Above all, I'm done with Ruby and her tantrums. O Lord! Haven't I got her *here*?" He put a

hand, the fine sensitive fingers curved, before his eyes. "That's all I want."

"And she?" said the Frenchman, resting his head upon his hand. "Is that the position she craves to occupy?"

"She may crave," said Lance easily. "I gave her a bit of fun—none readier. She's as pretty a girl as I've seen. But now—in the heat of finishing—oh, bah, Morny! Do you think there is or will be any world, above or below, where women genuinely care for art?"

Later, however, his newly complacent humour had to stand attack again. About five o'clock Paul was summoned by a vigorous shout across the landing of the staircase.

Being deeply engaged on a physical experiment at the moment, he went with an objurgation, and found Lance in his studio, standing over a drawing half-unpacked on the table.

"What—on—earth," said Lance, looking at him with a face blank of all expression, "does this signify?"

"Returned?" said Morny, who could not see the picture. "Well, one has to be rejected sometimes."

"Rejected? Man, it's the fellow Fergusson."

"Oh," said Paul, enlightened.

"I thought I'd got level with him up till now," said Lance, as though appealing aloud for justice to the heavens; "but blest if I know what *this* means, unless he was fooling all the time."

"That he was not," said Morny, and prepared to return to his dear glass bottles.

"But look here," said Lance, who was really strangely disturbed. "What does he mean by it? It's no good to me now, and there's not a word of explanation."

"Unless he wants, at all costs, to have nothing more to do with you," said Paul.

It was a happy thought; but it did not seem to satisfy his friend. In fact, this inexplicable step of Alexander's in the game of the portrait seemed to have more effect on the artist than all the logical and well-weighed proceedings that had gone before it. Lance swore a good deal in his solitude, and came to the conclusion that women altogether were bad for the nerves; indeed, it seemed a pity that, for obvious reasons, they could not be dispensed with in a painter's career.

Paul, had he chosen to enter on Sunday morning, might have been amused to see Meysie's celebrated portrait torn to shreds, and scattered about the floor. Even so, no doubt, was the model and all concerning her, disposed of in Lance's mind.

The red-haired Duchess, however, glorified already out of the taint of vulgarity she had contracted during the last few sittings from Meess Nurse, slim, radiant, in her gown of grey-blue velvet, and her look of wistful dreaming on high things, occupied the place of honour on the largest easel the studio possessed. And Morny,

or any other intruder, had he been able to catch the changing expressions of Lance Avery's face as he worked at her, could have satisfied a permanent curiosity that teased that young artist's friends, as to how he might look when he was —at least temporarily—in love.

XV

GILBERTE'S buoyant health overcame the disturbance of her nerves—if it had been that—on Thursday night; and on Friday she set her teeth, conducted Jean home to his father's house, and endured a long interview with André, during which he was exaggeratedly stiff and courteous, talked much lengthy triviality, and kept his eyes unbendingly fastened upon her. It made Gilberte feel on emerging that she had just escaped something; but she did not ask herself what. She went back to her little student's room, gave herself a violent shake, and plunged furiously into work, avoiding, however, the story of Guinevere, which she felt she knew well enough for all purposes.

She worked with hardly a break that day and the next. On the Saturday night her brain was singularly active and brilliant. She sat long in her chair by the window work-table, her books scattered at her side, feeling a contempt for her proximate trial, and a soaring capacity to confound any examiner who dared approach her.

Gilberte had never been called clever in her

family except by Paul ; and even he had never said as much to her. She had been useful truly, but the gentle Jeanne had easily outshone her in usefulness. Nevertheless there were moments of excitement like the present when a sense of unused capacities overwhelmed her, accompanied by a savage unmaidenly desire for knowledge and independence. It was such moments of revolt, when she was younger, that had led to her scratching, hair-pulling matches with Paul ; for had not he, as a boy and her elder, all that she most desired and needed ? The sight of him was occasionally intolerable even now, when he was more benevolent, and—at least openly—less contemptuous. The fact that he and his younger sister had always been considered much alike, and were much thrown together, had increased her chances for involuntary comparison, and so for jealousy as well.

In the exalted, trampling frame of mind induced by her reflections, Gilberte suddenly took pen and paper and wrote. She felt her ideas flow so easily into English, that she hardly cared what subject inspired them, being occupied only by the glad sense of mastery over the language that was not hers. Having finished, she laid aside the results, promising herself to show them to her Englishman the following day, and enjoy his astonishment ; for she was well aware she wrote in English far better than she talked. In coming to the decision, as in

the first impulse to give rein to her ideas, she had a spring of joy ; and felt all the evening, and in the rare waking hours of the night, a singular relief and security for having written.

The tale her pen had imposed upon her was a singular little legend that had come into her mind, she could not say whence or wherefore, the day before, when Jean was teasing her for a story. It was the legend of a sea-board village of the western coasts, submerged with many others by a monstrous tide at some dark period of history. The horror of the flood came by night, and at dawn only the bell-tower of the village stood above the waters, and near it the roof of a cottage set higher than the rest upon a hill. A little girl inhabited this cottage with her parents, a pious couple who had devoted their child from infancy to the Virgin. Driven from their beds by water, these poor folk crept upon the roof, and thence looked abroad for help in the first light of day. But nothing was to be seen but a few poor peaks of the drowned village, the tower of the church, and the swirling grey waters, ever-rising, about all.

From this point Gilberte had diverged with little Jean, seeing from a child's eyes the ancient form too ludicrous. But in writing she rendered the original carefully in all its savage simplicity. The waters climb inch by inch, and the poor man sees there is no escape. Yet hopeful to the last, he sets his back against the high sloping

roof, and makes the woman stand upon his shoulders, holding her feet as she steadies her back against the slope. Still the waters climb relentless, until he can no longer hold the child. In turn the mother takes the child from his drowning grasp, and places it above her, her own bent shoulders supporting its little feet.

Still the waters move upward. Nothing but the child is now left, and she is perishing.

At this supreme moment, our blessed Lady decides to leave the bell-tower, which grows too damp for her dainty taste, and rises, guarding in her gathered robes the sacred treasures of the church, above the village of her patronage. Rising she sees a little speck below, the fluttering of a child's blue hood. "My colours," thinks the blessed Lady, and bends lower to look. It is then that, seizing the child to save her own, she grows astonished at the weight resisting her. Dropping the treasures from her robe, the holy dame pulls with both hands, and to her amazement draws up not one but three persons, the woman fast to her child, the man to his wife.

"It is the Family," she observes, in admiration. "C'est la Famille."

On Sunday morning Gilberte received a letter in her father's thin, dry-looking hand. She did not open it immediately, but sat gazing at it while she drank her morning coffee, half-guessing

its contents, and, as it were, luxuriating in the hostility with which the shape of the letters inspired her.

Gilberte's attitude to the writer was, and had been now for a considerable period, undutiful. M. Armand Morny had been an army doctor until ill-health broke his career, and he possessed, as though by unconscious absorption, an odd selection of the military faults and virtues. His younger daughter was aware that she had done her position no good in his eyes, by her retreat from the scene of action. Formerly she had been used to combat at intervals the platitudes he liked to launch at all seasons on the subject of women, and young women in particular. In those days she discovered the extent to which he condemned her pertness, but never detected his secret relish of her wit. One way or the other, she was allowed no individuality, for both in the wit and the wickedness she was merely a bad imitation of Paul. But when she took it upon herself to retire, as Paul himself had already done, beyond the reach of the parental stricture, she earned from the severe father a sentence which was, though silent, the more sweeping. She deserted, in the first place, her post; an only daughter's post being clearly at the skirts of her mother; she showed, in the second, base ingratitude for plans which had been prudently laid down for her good; and, finally—though this was the last thing she suspected—she made

herself missed in a household where quiet was restored at the expense of dulness; and where nothing young and lively any longer raised its head to invite the breeze of censure.

"My Daughter," the letter ran, when opened, "I time this communication designedly that you may have leisure to reflect upon it, before joining your family here for dinner this evening.

"I had last night a visit from our good André, and in the course of it received from him a proposal for your hand in marriage. He has even before this touched upon the subject to an extent to acquaint us with his present fortune and prospects, and with the very flattering regard in which he holds you, as well as the other members of my family. But André is a man who takes his time about any step of importance, and I gather that it is only recently that his decision has adopted its final form.

"I need not say the proposition accords with our wishes—he has reason to think also with your own. There seems nothing against your being settled soon, indeed at once, since it would suit him well that you should accompany him and the child to his villa at Trouville in July.

"Therefore you will abandon forthwith this pretext of an examination, in which, your brother mentions to us, you have in any case no chance of succeeding; and you will return to us here immediately.

"In the matter of any small expense incurred, you will count, if you please, upon me. I have already repaid to André the sum which, I understand from him now for the first time, was supplied to you by him."

"Mon pauvre père," murmured Gilberte, biting, according to habit, at her hair, which was still unfastened and over her shoulder when the letter came. "Is it that by paying for the examination he can more easily dispose of the student? That he can allude to that shows him to be at his last resources. And quoting an opinion of Paul's to me—that is surely also unworthy, when I have had to hear so often what he thinks of Paul. No; it is rather farcical."

She thrust the letter away.

When her mother arrived towards midday, she was still half-dressed, and nibbling her hair. Madame Morny, seeing the letter on the table, and the dark cloud on the girl's brow, said nothing, and began to gather up and arrange the heavy hair in silence. When it came to the stage of pinning, Gilberte had recovered sufficiently to assist her with an absent hand.

"You have lost a little," observed madame, "but that may be owing merely to the summer weather."

"Thin hair," said Gilberte, "is becoming to one who teaches for her livelihood."

"I came to lunch with you," said madame,

ignoring her, "because I thought it possible that you might not wish to come to dinner."

"I had planned to come to dinner as usual," said Gilberte haughtily, "and my father seems to desire it. *That* is such a rarity——"

"Rubbish," said madame, in her plaintive little voice. "He always desires it, since he would prefer you to be permanently at home."

"A fireside dummy," assented Gilberte, "in order that he may throw things at my head. But my head is too good for that, ma mère."

"It is tidy now," said madame calmly.

"I alluded to its contents," said Gilberte, looking up.

"I only wish it were as well-ordered within," said madame, embracing her with a quiet air of business. She sat down facing her daughter, and folded her hands in her lap. Her kind, tired eyes took in the girl's aspect in several flitting glances. In the intervals they ascertained that all was in impeccable order in the room.

"You are perplexed by a choice presented you," she began presently, in a deprecating tone.

"Not at all," returned Gilberte. "There is no choice."

"Ah?"

"I take the examination which begins to-morrow, and, at all costs, I get through. My course is absolutely clear."

"And, therefore, you look as spiritless as a dead mackerel. Yes," said madame pensively, "and

Paul, from whom I come, was much the same. I thought he must be suffering in his digestion at first; however, it appears that he was refused again by his Russian girl's sister last night."

Gilberte laughed suddenly; but her little mother, though she afforded her a single glance, still looked gloomy.

"Between you," she said, "my life is not enviable, eh? You are the reverse, the one and the other, of what one would expect. He sets himself upon marrying, you against it."

"Marry?" cried Gilberte. "Paul?"

"No less is his purpose. I got him to confess it in the end," said madame, "though he seemed ashamed."

Her daughter laughed again. "Were it not you," she observed, "that would be the language of a cynic."

The little woman shrugged. "I observe," she said. "I have noticed other young men, for Paul's sake, and other girls, for yours. I can tell you, therefore, you are behaving in each case contrary to the habit of the generality."

"I have no wish to be peculiar," said Gilberte, becoming serious for the first time.

"Thank Heaven for that at least," said madame, with sudden excitement. "Let us leave it there for the moment," she added more calmly, rising, "and have some lunch. Whether examined or not to-morrow, I insist on your being properly dressed and nourished to-day."

Gilberte, having completed her toilet under the critical maternal eye, took her to the best of the many excellent little bouillons of her quarter, and ate according to her decision and direction, with much sly delight and tenderness. In her inward state of weariness and distress, it came as a relief to be managed like a child again. Her mother at least constituted a firm point in the whirl of conflicting duties and passions, always restful and always the same. For the time, she let all argument slide, and watched with amusement the progress of the mutual understanding that defined itself almost immediately between the dignified head waitress of the restaurant and madame; an understanding which passed through rapid stages into a kind of stern friendship, resembling the friendship of two generals on the field—with infinite advantage, by the way, to the lunch provided. There can be no reasonable doubt that the two ladies had the best cut from the best joint cooked in the restaurant kitchen that day; and the happy waitress had even a word of commendation to carry back to the cook from the little expert in the faded cloak.

When they left their luncheon-place, Gilberte conducted her back to her lodging, though personally she would fain have lingered in the sun and fresh air: for the dull cold weather of the week past was at last improving. But madame did not love fresh air, and she looked tired to-day,

even more than usual; so she was installed without delay in her daughter's one comfortable chair, and Gilberte sat upright before her on a high wooden stool, boldly facing a long shaft of June sunlight, which crept round the blind to illuminate her. At intervals she squeezed her eyes and screwed up her nose at its dazzle, but she did not close the blind.

"You are not looking pretty to-day," her mother began presently, having rested. "You have even more the air of a 'gamine,' I fear, since you took to study. I wish you would not imitate Paul."

"I do not," Gilberte answered this ancient accusation, straightening her face, which had been twisted.

"It might be wiser to sit out of the sun," madame commented.

"But I love the sun," said Gilberte, and threw her arms up behind her head, with the same little cat-like stretch she had used the first time Alexander beheld her.

"It is thus," said madame, "that one's hair catches the dust."

The girl drew her stool out of the sunbeam, and nearer to her mother. "I will not," she said, with a smile, "imitate Paul and contradict you." As she spoke, she advanced a hand upon madame's knee.

"Ma pauvre petite," said madame at once, gently patting the hand. "Thou wilt not come

to dinner, eh? Say, what message shall I carry back to him?"

Gilberte gave a short laugh. "Mon Dieu, what can I say? You will have need of all your art to soften it."

"You refuse?"

"To be sure I refuse," she cried. "You do not expect me to go to heel when André commands me."

"It is your father that commands." It was wonderful the effect that "ton père" had upon her mother's lips. It had the weight of tradition behind it, but another note of personal supplication infinitely more wistful and delicate.

"And you?" said Gilberte.

"I think with him."

"You do not—you cannot, my mother." Her tone was low.

"I wish to see you married."

"Well? For what reason?"

"For what reason?" Madame looked a little astonished. "You cannot ask that seriously."

"You think it is the question of a 'gamine,' eh? But I am serious, as a woman, now."

"When you have been married a year," said madame, folding her hands, "I will answer it, unless you can do so yourself."

Gilberte sighed, and sat silent. Having no long hair to bite, she pulled an elastic curl from behind her ear and bit that. Presently, as though to vary the discussion, she reached for a notebook

on the table, and mutely indicated the little essay in English to her mother.

Madame hesitated, for she had no confidence in her own powers in the tongue. Then she felt for her glasses, affixed them, and began dubiously to read.

" This is yours," she said presently, looking up, " or a copy ? "

" Mine," said Gilberte. Madame Morny's anxious face cleared visibly, and she read on with greater confidence. Before she reached the end, she looked up once more.

" You must take that examination," she said, almost with excitement. " Myself I will persuade your father to-night, in the good after-dinner mood. You must not waste this, it is clear. Waste," she muttered to herself, " sheer waste. No, no ; sois tranquille, ma petite."

" Finish it," said Gilberte, whose hands were now clasped calmly in her lap.

Madame finished at leisure, and then laid the manuscript aside and wiped her glasses.

" It is charming," she pronounced. " It is true also, in essence. The family is the beginning of all, and the end. The moral is good—and à propos," she added.

" The man fights for the woman," said Gilberte, looking down at the hands in her lap ; " and the woman for the child." She paused.

" It is so," said her mother softly.

" You are fighting for me," said the girl,

looking up, "and I for the future. Oh, ma chérie"—she flung herself from the stool upon her knees, and clasped her hands anew upon her mother's lap—"can you not see the difference? Will you not see it with me also?"

"But I do. My beloved, do not weep. Be sure I am looking at your future also."

"My child? Are you looking at my child?"

"It is not delicate——" began madame.

"No. I am not delicate for the moment. Listen! I will say all, and finish. André is already old. He has not lived well——"

"Chut."

"Oh," exclaimed Gilberte, "is a girl then to have no sense? What if I have no child? Is that to be my happiness?" She gazed upward a moment. "For my father, one sees it," she said. "One follows his thoughts. Yes, even when Jeanne married, I could already do so. It is even convenient, perhaps, to have twice the same son-in-law." She laughed through her tears, and bit her lip. "But you—I cannot see it. *You* are not he."

"You see too much," madame murmured; but she was moved, and her tired eyes, lifted over the girl's head, had a strained expression.

"It is the one chance," she said, after an interval. "Do not forget we are poor, Gilberte—and Paul is expensive, the poor boy. André alone presents himself. If there were another——"

There was a pause.

"There is not, eh?" said madame.

"How can there be," said Gilberte, "since I am poor."

"Pish!" The mother's pride came through. "You are pretty, and know it. You are not, thanks to me, ignorant of what a girl should know. Even your wit," said madame, "might have its value, who knows. For you have told me you meet in this life of yours outlandish kinds of men."

"You would not have me," said Gilberte, her face hidden, "marry an outlandish kind."

"Bon Dieu, no. Yet, if it were for your happiness, my angel——"

The girl looked up and embraced her suddenly. "We talk in the air," she said; "it is not practical. And it is you that are the angel, to have borne in such a manner my impertinence. Impertinence it is, I know, to you, from a girl as yet unwed. Yet tell me one thing more, before I leave the attitude of confession. Jeanne—our Jeanne was happy, at least?"

"She was happy," said madame steadily. "As her mother I should know. André was good to her, and in her married life she had no complaint of him."

"I thank you, ma mère."

"You need not, my child, for that you have a right to ask. And indeed, I should have told you, had you not." They clung together one instant more, and Gilberte rose.

"Now," she said, wiping her eyes openly at the looking-glass, with her little handkerchief, "to the practical details. You are my ambassadress, are you not? André must give me six months—time at least," she laughed, "to fail as a teacher, before I decide. I give the question meanwhile my best attention. I implore him—am I entitled to implore?" She turned about, looking, if possible, a trifle more charming for the traces of emotion.

"He is much in love," said madame judicially.

"As much," said Gilberte, "as he was with—oh, forgive me." She laughed—a laugh not clear of the ring of wretchedness. "Well, then, mother, I implore him to let you choose the governess he takes with him for Jean to Trouville."

"She shall not be attractive," said madame soothingly.

"Oh, let her be as attractive as you will, so she is kind, and has a steady head. I do not say Jean is an easy child," said Gilberte, turning back to the glass, "but he is affectionate, and he is cleverer, though I say it, than Jeanne."

"That," said Jeanne's mother tranquilly, "would not be difficult." She smoothed her skirts and rose. "Is that all, ma petite?"

Gilberte turned round finally.

"My thanks to André," she said, with her head up, "my love—respects—what you will, dearest—to my father; and he shall yet see me first on the lists, in spite of Paul."

XVI

GILBERTE sat at the open window for some time after her mother's departure, enjoying the sun and air to her heart's content. Her mother's sympathy had gone far to calm the tumult of her mind, but there was still something to be done before she could meet Alexander with equanimity. This the sunshine, and light June air, and stir of holiday mirth in the court below her window presently accomplished. She then proceeded to change her plain black morning-dress for something more becoming to the weekly festival, put on her eclipsing hat, and went out to get some flowers for her work-table. If her gentleman came—of course, he might forget—she might just as well receive him in a pretty room; so she spent her small silver recklessly in vivid crimson and scarlet gladiolus at a flower-stall in the Rue Soufflot. The vender of the flowers, a little lame man with the gallantry of the South, insinuated compliments as he fastened up her bouquet.

Gilberte smiled, but had a heedful eye to the flowers, for she knew from various friends who

dealt with him that he was not scrupulously honest.

"No, no; not the great red one," she said. "I have said already it is too dear for me."

"So much the worse for me, mademoiselle." The little man shrugged and included it in the bunch. "Mademoiselle must take it, for has it not earned her admiration? It would but fade if left with me upon the stall."

"Flowers cannot feel," said Gilberte severely.

"Perhaps not," said the flower-vender; "for which reason, no doubt, we lend them our own sentiments." He presented the bunch complete with a gesture.

Gilberte laughed, and having paid him, turned away feeling the better for the little tribute. The people were nice, she told herself. She loved them, as she loved the very dust and air of Paris. Sunday afternoon was the occasion to see her people at their best, and she walked deliberately through the crowd in the gardens, attracting various amicable remarks by her lively looks and gorgeous bouquet as she went.

The chestnuts were long over in the Luxembourg, and the may was brown. The beds now displayed all their summer pomps, and the first tang of insidious scent from the lime trees foretold July. The fine weather was coming back, Gilberte told herself, looking up at the sun glinting through the branches, and down at the flocks of light dresses under the trees. She

might even be in for a hot week of examination—well, the more reason to keep a cool head, and prove her father thoroughly wrong. Even the vision of the unknown terrors ahead of her, on which the old hands among her classmates laid such stress, could not dishearten her to-day. Happiness was in the air, and everything promised well.

As for Alexander, she would not think too closely of him. She dodged the thought like a shy child, letting contentment from it find her as it would. She was going home soon to see him: that was enough. She was on the edge of that meeting, as she was of her test to-morrow. Anything might come of either, but she was not without a darting confidence, born of her radiant health, the glances of teasing admiration she encountered in the walks, and the beauty of the day.

She went home towards the promised hour, arranged the flowers in her single precious vase, whence their crisp splendour shed a glory on her dusky room, boiled her little kettle on its lamp, and prepared a dainty tea-table, with a cheerful certainty that no Englishman could refuse the refreshment. It is true she had a moment's debate as to whether the Scotch might be different from the English in this respect. She seemed vaguely to have heard that the northern people had strange tastes, though she could not

for her life remember any details. Suppose an examiner should choose to question her as to that in her " oral " ! Gilberte determined, as she passed to and fro putting finishing touches to her room, to ask her gentleman about it, when he came.

As he still delayed, she filled the interval with some reading. It would be good to put herself in the vein of English-speaking, that she might address him fluently without mistake. If she made mistakes, she must warn him to correct her. And yet—she added to the thought with an inner smile—she need not warn him, for he certainly would do so. She laughed involuntarily, thinking of his sour expression when he was so shy before the girls that day. She was glad the girls were not present to-day to tease him—and her.

At that, she got up hastily, and went to look at her watch, which was hanging on its little bracket by her bed. She must remember, she thought as she crossed the room, to put the hands back, or better still, to set her alarum clock, that she should on no account fail to wake the next morning. She glanced at her father's photograph, and wondered in passing whether it was from him she inherited this tendency to high spirits on the verge of a campaign.

Turning to the watch, she found that it was nearly six—and the watch was slow. Surely, thought Gilberte, standing there by the low

couch, she had told him five o'clock. He was not a very punctual person, this gentleman of the North: nor very courtly, considering that the hour appointed had been hers.

The little cakes and the little kettle had been put away, and it was nearly seven by the watch above the bed, when Gilberte, trying to read, with her teeth set, by the window, heard a slow foot mounting her stairs.

"It is not he," she said angrily, having started at the sound. "He would come up more quickly. It is the concierge — doubtless carrying his excuse." Her little shoe tapped the floor, for Gilberte had a temper.

The footstep stopped, hesitating without, and a hand knocked.

"Come in," she said, between hope and dread.

The visitor opened and came in. It was Alexander.

"I have to ask your pardon," he said, in French more awkward than usual, advancing. "The fact is——"

"You are not well," said Gilberte gently. "Sit down." She pushed forward her own chair, and drew to herself the stool. He did not observe the action, or protest against it, but took the first seat offered thankfully.

"It's all right, Miss Morny," he said, dropping back upon English with relief, since she had spoken it "There's nothing wrong with me,

except I have been rather worried about things—and I don't know how to apologise."

His faithful eyes fixed her, as she sat motionless watching him. It had occurred to her mind, as she beheld him enter lately, that she never saw now his plain Scottish face, but framed in the helmet of romance: the mouth grimly set under the ardours of the fray, the short-lashed grey eyes above holding infinite tenderness for the sufferings of slaves and sinners he could not share. They held that tenderness now, but whether for her suffering or another's, who could say?

"The fact is," he said gently, "my little friend, Miss Lampeter, is ill."

"And you?" she said quickly.

"There is nothing at all the matter with me," said Alexander, frowning. Then, as though in answer to her entreating eyes—"I got a kind of breakdown in the spring, but the doctors put me straight, and sent me packing, before I came abroad. There is nothing now I can't foresee and fix up for myself. It's worth no one else's attention at all." Again he looked at her, and proceeded. "The thing I wanted to say to you is this."

"The original thing?" said Gilberte.

"No," he said, and visibly blushed. "That is past now, I am glad to say. I'm a great blunderer, Miss Morny, but things come straight of themselves sometimes."

"I am glad you have come, all the same," she said. Her sweet little clear accents fell on silence.

"I meant to write," he said at last, "but I had to come. I can't deal with you by writing, after what you have done for me."

"What have I done?" thought Gilberte; but she did not say it.

"But now I have come," he continued, "it is a poor sort of story I have to tell you. You see she—Meysie—is in my hands. Whatever of her is not my property, is property entrusted to me by her father and mother. They married rather late in life, and she is their only child. It was all they could do," said Alexander, "to give any of her to me; but they did so. They trust me, now and in the future, to look after her. You know this perhaps," he added.

"I knew it, through my brother," said Gilberte.

"Yes. Well, Meysie is not strong, and rather reckless about herself. She caught a bad cold during the week, and went out on Thursday afternoon, when it was so cold; and so she developed bronchitis. I am afraid she is very ill." As the tale became more difficult, the phrases grew short, as though breath failed him a little. "These two days I have been almost living at the pension. I got the best doctor I could find. I am trying to find a nurse."

"Has she no one to look after her?" said Gilberte.

"No woman. It is odd; she has been here six months, but she seems to have no friends—no real friends, I mean. The only lady she knows there was ill herself, and moved suddenly yesterday to the country. The people of the house are not bad, but they have a grievance against her—I can't go into it."

The harassed line showed on his brow again. It was clear he had been having something too much of grievances. "A good nurse is the only chance, until her mother comes."

"Have you written to her mother?"

"I must, to-night." He paused, quite plainly to get his breath. "But in the interval—I wondered if perhaps you knew of a nurse."

"My mother would tell you of one. Ah—if I had known this afternoon." She hit the table with her hand. "Montmartre is so far."

"I could not leave Meysie this afternoon. She could hardly bear me to go this evening. I am the only person here, you see, that she really knows. She is feverish and so not reasonable." He paused. "She just clings to me like a bairn," he said.

"Pauvre petite," said Gilberte. "Listen, Monsieur Fergusson." She stumbled over his name, which she had never before attempted. "This is what I think is best. I will come myself to her for the night. I am free, and my affairs are easy to settle here. I have but to lock the door and leave a message with the concierge."

"No, no, you must not," said Alexander. But his whole face cleared absurdly.

"But yes, I will. I am as free as air." She watched him closely, and saw that he was ignorant of the examination's date, or had forgotten it.

"I am a good nurse," she said. "My mother and I took turns at nursing Jeanne, and my mother herself is subject to bronchitis in the winter months. I have learned from her. I know all that one should do, and I can cook as well, so that those persons of the house need not be deranged. You will let me come?"

It was almost a command, and she held out the frank hand of comradeship.

"It was more than I dared ask," he began, and stumbled.

"Why was it?" said Gilberte, withdrawing the hand which he clearly would not take. "Are you so afraid of me?"

"Most afraid," he said, and his still voice wavered. "I think you must know that."

"I think I must," thought Gilberte; and joy filled the deep places of her heart.

"Besides, you are working," said Alexander, after a minute, in his ordinary tone.

"My lesson will be in the sick-room," said Gilberte cheerfully. "Shall I not talk English all the time?"

Some of her inner joy brimmed over into her voice, for he looked up, and saw the beauty of her eyes. Yet he only saw it for a second, for

she swung her hat off the couch where it lay, and turning to the glass, eclipsed with its brim their dangerous light.

"I may tell you one thing," said Gilberte, with her back to him; "I shall keep you out of the sick-room."

"You had better," said Alexander. Glancing towards him in the mirror, she saw that he had picked up one of her gloves, and was fingering it.

"Not only that," she proceeded, "but when you have shown me the house, and presented me to Mlle. Lampeter, I shall send you home to bed."

"To bed?"

This was a shock indeed, and he started round towards her, dropping the glove he had been teasing on the floor. Gilberte was laughing.

"I was just having a look at you in the glass," she explained. "I remember how you so dislike to be stared at in public. You have had some very white nights lately, eh? I consider, M. Fergusson, that it is sleep you need."

There was a painful pause.

"You accent my name wrongly," said Alexander. "If you consider its meaning, you will see it can only be accented on the first syllable."

"Tiens," said Gilberte. Having finished her toilet, she turned about. "Oh, where is my other glove?"

By means of this short conversation it came to

pass that when the candidates gathered the next day for their ordeal at the Sorbonne, ardent, or arrogant, or lachrymose, according to their constitution or their opinion of themselves, Gilberte's place among them was empty.

Jeanne, Jacqueline, and Paulette looked at one another across the ranks with the lifted eyebrows of consternation. Even an hour later, in the throes of composition, they stole glances to the rear, in the hope that Gilberte might have crept to her place. It was a subject after her own heart, too; for was not their theme to trace the development of that curious British ideal called a gentleman, from the period of Addison and Steele to the present day?

Jeanne, Jacqueline, and Paulette were strong upon the period of Addison, but after the early part of the nineteenth century they grew vague, and were content with elegantly expressed generalities. Gilberte, they felt, a person of humour and imagination, would probably, on the subject of the present day, have given her examiners something to think about.

Later still on the Monday evening, the group of anxious little friends flew up her stairs, and besieged her door in a body. Consternation greater than ever awaited them there, for Gilberte's door was locked, and not a sound within betrayed her presence.

"What is it?" said Jacqueline alarmed, the tears in her blue eyes.

" Her father ? They have fetched her home ? " Jeanne looked at Paulette.

" Pish. Gilberte would never have given in."

" He might be ill, the old curmudgeon, eh ? " For Gilberte's friends took her part in the family feud.

" Dieu sait," shrugged Jeanne. " Try the concierge."

Application to this functionary resulted in the fact that a gentleman had fetched mademoiselle, and she was away for a few days.

But a gentleman ! All thrills faded before this. Jacqueline clasped her hands.

" Her brother, hey ? " said sensible Jeanne.

" No, mademoiselle. M. Paul had come that day, and sworn much at not finding her."

" How then ? What gentleman ? "

The concierge shrugged. " Mademoiselle addressed him in *that* tongue."

Paulette turned to her companions.

" Maréchal," she said sepulchrally. " I thought as much. She has eloped with our valued professor to avoid the absurd André. There can be no other explanation."

XVII

"Oh, I *am* glad to see you, Mollie," said Meysie, falling into her mother's arms. "For of all miserable times of my life, these last two weeks have been the God-forsakenest."

"My poor pet," said Mrs. Lampeter, clasping her. "I came as soon as ever father would let me, of course. But my asthma was so bad, and dear Alec's four telegrams each more reassuring than the last, that I put it off until he thought I was more fit for the journey. I never saw such clear telegrams," said Mrs. Lampeter, dropping into a chair, and tucking up a strand of her soft hair, which was coming down behind. "One saw the sense of them directly, and that is so rare."

"It's certainly more than can be said for yours," said Meysie. "Alec kept all of yours, by way of souvenirs, I suppose, under that alabaster lion on the chimney-piece. You can read them all again, now, if you like, and tell me what they really mean."

"Nothing would induce me," said Mrs. Lampeter, with a shudder. "Now lie back on

the cushions, darling, and let me hear all about it."

Meysie told her all about it, with zest. She felt so well and merry this morning in the room Gilberte had arranged to perfection before her final departure two days earlier ; extended in her long chair, with the sun pouring upon her through the open window, and the cheery noises of Paris in the street below her balcony.

She related it also with some natural emotion, for the heroine of her own romance had never come quite so near sensational extinction before. It was a really important incident in that lady's career, the attack of bronchitis in the wilds of the Quartier Latin, with savages in the shape of unsympathetic people all about her, Agatha's blank desertion when she was feeling ever so wretched that Saturday, poor Alec's face—he had dropped back into the position of working hero—with all its changes, from day to day, and the rather opinionated Person whom Alec had found, just *not* too late, to nurse her.

" Alexander has been wonderful," said Mrs. Lampeter. " And the nurse must have been most kind. What was her name, May ? "

" I don't know," said Meysie, " and I was too ill to ask, at the time, though Alec did mumble something when he first brought her in. I call her the Person to him, because he was so set up about finding her ; and, anyhow, you can always call them Mademoiselle."

"And she stayed with you, dear? or just came in?"

"Oh, goodness, she had to be here those first days," said Meysie. "Monday and Tuesday I was nearly off my head. She found herself a bed somehow, though Mademoiselle Pion had sworn to Alec she had none. I tried to tell her what to do, for she had the strangest ideas. I don't know what you would have said to her proceedings, Mollie. But she just sat on me whenever I tried to say a word. She was rather an alarming creature, though she had a nice voice. Of course," added Meysie, "I was at a disadvantage."

Mrs. Lampeter murmured sympathy. She had leant her head on the pillow by her daughter's, leaving her hair to its fate. Mother and child were sitting close together, their hands locked like comrades, their English eyes, so alike in the bright glance that held a constant childish expectation, resting upon the summer trees swaying gently in the gardens without.

"She would not even tell me the names of half the things she gave me," said Meysie, "or gave them fearful chemical names I couldn't translate. The most harmless common medicine sounds awful in French, and she might have been poisoning me for all I knew. However, I dare say the poor dear liked to air her science."

"As long as she cured you, my blessing," said Mrs. Lampeter.

"Oh, I intended to get better," said Meysie. "A rather silly woman I knew in the house here used to talk about will to me till I was tired; but there is something in it. Of course poor Alec made a fuss. He probably thought I was dying on the Monday—didn't he, dearest? But She damped him dreadfully. She simply wouldn't allow him to put his nose in the room; even," added Meysie suddenly, "when I called for him in delirium."

She was not sure whether she had actually done this, but the heroine always did, so it came to the same thing. That lady, as Meysie had hinted, had had something of a struggle to retain her supremacy under the reign of Gilberte; and the part she had played needed touching up in retrospect. Meysie had by now spent so many hours adding these picturesque touches in the privacy of her own mind, that the natural opportunity for giving them expression, and that for the ear of the most sympathetic listener of her world, was really a godsend. She furbished all the resources of her eloquence to do so.

"The most crushing thing about her," she proceeded, "was a kind of imitation modesty she had on certain subjects: art, for instance, and English. When I felt better last week, I told her about art a little, because one must make conversation, especially over here. Besides, I was not going to lie like a log and be looked at superciliously between people's eyelashes, I can

tell you, Mollie. So I asked Mademoiselle la Personne if she was interested in artistic matters ; and she said at once she knew nothing about them."

"And did she?" said her mother, with sympathy.

"Technically, nothing, of course," said Meysie, "but theoretically, a disgusting amount. I had to say at last, 'For goodness' sake, mademoiselle, do contradict me, rather than look at me like that ; because if I *do* think differently to you, I shan't die of it.' And then she laughed, and did. She pretended she did not want to excite me," said Meysie ; "but it was nothing but foreigners' arrogance, as I proved, because when she did start talking, she let me have it."

"And did it excite you, love?"

"It might have," said the heroine, considering, "if her voice had not been so nice, and her manner, oh" — she considered again — "sumptuous."

"Is that the word you meant?" inquired Mrs. Lampeter, after a dubious pause.

"Yes, love," said Meysie. "It means a sort of courteously comfortable superiority, if you want to know."

"I do," said Mrs. Lampeter. "Because usually it means something else. Did she talk well, the sumptuous person?"

"Oh yes ; they always do."

"French, then?"

"No—that was the annoying part of it. She talked English the whole time, and asked me to correct her."

"Poor Meysie," her mother laughed.

"It made me quite tired," said Meysie, "to hear her putting all her subjunctives in the right places, and dragging in words like 'whom' and 'whence,' which sound as antiquated as the Flood. I told her they were only used by village schoolmasters, not by the really upper-class best people I knew at home."

"Alluding to the class whence you spring," her mother asked, "or the person whom you address?"

"Well, there you are," her daughter retorted. "I don't know which of the two sounded silliest."

"I hope she took the correction in good part."

"She laughed," said Meysie. "The Person's way of laughing, Mollie, was rather nice."

"Sumptuous?" said Mrs. Lampeter.

"No—not in the least: that's the point. Nice—like a nice, sweet cat. I loved her dreadfully for two seconds when she did it."

"How old was she?" said Mrs. Lampeter, after a pause.

"About forty, I should think," said Meysie. "Oh well, thirty perhaps. You could hardly be so sumptuous as she was, Mollie, under thirty."

"I am getting at it," laughed Mrs. Lampeter. "I shall no doubt realise it completely when I

see her. I must find her out and thank her, May, before I go."

Meysie had been going to speak, but the addition of three words diverted her.

"Now don't be restless, Mollie," she ejaculated, turning. "Now you have got here at last, you may as well stop a bit."

"I can stay till the fourteenth, darling," said her mother thoughtfully, "if cook doesn't poison father in the interval; and if the treasurer of the League will take over my work, and I can find anybody else with public spirit enough to represent us at the Congress."

Mrs. Lampeter, like her daughter, made a speciality of the personal pronoun; only, possessing an advantage over Meysie in years and usefulness, hers were mostly in the plural number.

After various merry diversions into home affairs, the pair returned to the original subject.

"There's another thing," said Meysie, "and I ought to tell you while I remember. I don't know even if Alec's Person has been paid. As soon as I could talk to him, I asked him about it; but he only said she was a friend of his, and did not want paying at all. He supposed I shouldn't see through that. It really is absurd, Mollie dear, that he should pay my nurses. He has had enough bother in any case, silly old goose. Only you know what a rock he is for obstinacy, and I am really too weak to argue."

"I will see about it, darling," said Mrs. Lam-

peter. "Naturally the nurse must be our affair. I will talk to Alec seriously, and put it as a matter of business, then he will see."

"I'm not so sure of that, dearest," said Meysie. "You may get squashed. You are not at your shiningest in business, you know."

"Well, as a matter of justice, then," said Mrs. Lampeter triumphantly. "Alec feels that. It is clearly unjust for him to pay nurses, with all the telegrams and letters he has written me, too."

"What has he written you letters about?" Meysie demanded, after a pause.

"Well, May, what do you suppose?"

"Does he really talk about me?"

"A little," laughed Mrs. Lampeter. "I have been so happy about you, since the good boy has been here. He never misses anything father and I really want to know; and he puts it beautifully, with nice little bits of Scotch just trimming it here and there. That is why the Monday letter came as such a shock."

Meysie paused again.

"He never called me a prig, or a prancing idiot, or anything of that sort?" she inquired with suspicious calm.

Her mother turned a surprised face; and the next instant had the flood of pent confession poured upon her. Knowing Meysie's faculty for sudden and sweeping enthusiasms in all departments of life and art, Mrs. Lampeter had not lent too much weight to statements that might

otherwise have seemed startling in the letters dealing with Lance Avery. The young artist, whose name was recognised in parallel London circles, had become one of Meysie's little gods, she supposed, raised for a time upon a studio pedestal. Meysie spoke of him in hyperbole, which, to the ear of a mother regarding her as a child, seemed hardly overdone. It was well and good, and she herself in the student era had done as much. She had answered laughingly, in the spirit in which she thought the letters had been written.

But having thus lightly passed over it, she was somewhat taken aback to hear the name revived, at this late period, as that of the hero of a serious episode in her daughter's past. Serious at least she saw it was, in the little heroine's estimation, and she strained her sympathy at once to take the point of view.

Mrs. Lampeter was, for her forty-eight years, extremely young and inexperienced herself; and she was divided between rather shy horror, natural diversion, and anxiety lest the excitement of the reckless recital of past emotions should undo the good to the girl which her coming had worked. She listened to all that would come without much interruption, soothed much and scolded a little in the motherly proportion; but she left her young convalescent's chamber, at the end of all, feeling rather thoughtful.

. . . . . .

It was some days later than this that Mrs. Lampeter found her first chance of a word with Alexander alone. The weather had by then settled into a golden July calm, and Meysie had been for the first time able to go beyond her balcony, and to take a cautious trial walk in the gardens. She went alone on her mother's arm, for with that odd shyness of hers, she refused to be shown out of doors to Alexander before she could walk well. Mrs. Lampeter had escorted her in when she had had enough, tucked her up for an afternoon sleep, and then, having some time on her hands, went out to do a little shopping.

She was a lady of impulses ; and, issuing from the Bon Marché in Alexander's neighbourhood, it suddenly occurred to her to visit him, having long nursed a motherly desire to criticise his room.

" My dear, am I disturbing you ? " said Mrs. Lampeter, having knocked with the stick of her sunshade at his door.

" Come in," said Alexander, rising from the table to receive her with a smile. He had arranged the little foreign apartment, with its frivolous curtains and gimcrack furniture, in almost comical imitation of his beloved and dusty room at Balliol ; she noticed it at once.

" I thought I would just discover your hiding-place," said Mrs. Lampeter. " I am only keeking in, as you would say, and you shall not be disturbed. What a lot of books, good gracious ! "

"Not near enough," said Alexander, scratching his jaw as he regarded his collection, which was neatly ranged on the table and the floor. "The small libraries here haven't got a thing I want; and the big ones won't let me have them out."

"Don't you approve of Paris?" said Mrs. Lampeter.

"It's rather a daft-like place," said Alexander gravely. "I say, I wish you would have a better chair."

"I'm not going to stay a second," declared Mrs. Lampeter, putting down her parcels on the books, and moving to the chair indicated. "Do you know," she said presently, when she had settled in it, looking to his eyes delightfully English in her old cotton dress and black lace scarf, "Paris may be daft, but I rather think it has sobered Meysie."

"Oh, I hope not," said Alexander; who, having no other chair solid enough to support him, was sitting on the table.

"That can't be sincere, you know," said Mrs. Lampeter, "for a Scotsman."

"But it is," he said. "I love to see her jolly. I'm not such a stick as that."

"It is not so much jolly that I mean," said Mrs. Lampeter. She considered a moment, frowning lightly. "I am afraid, dear, she is not always very sensible. She is—well—such a little girl. She has been talking to me, these days she has been tied to her room; and I seem to see

signs that she has learnt a little, and is fond of you now in quite a different way ; and I meant to tell you, Alec, as soon as I got a chance. I hope it means that some time soon May will grow older, and be of more use to you." She held out her hand. " You have been very kind to her, Alec : I feel, somehow, to us all. Will you let me thank you, just this once, for all you have done for her and for us ? For the chances are "— she laughed—" I shall never be so modest again."

" Please don't," said Alexander. For an instant he almost drew back from the friendly hand ; then he took and clasped it gently. " It's you I have to thank for a lot," he said.

" Well, I won't deny," said Mrs. Lampeter, " there are times we feel generous, father and I. She has been our only plaything, which may be why she plays so well. But the nicest kittens, when they play, use claws ; and I could not bear our kitten really to scratch you, Alec."

" If she ever does," he said steadily, " I'll complain."

" You are a nice boy," said Mrs. Lampeter, and rose to look at the objects on the chimney-piece.

" What a clever drawing," she said, in the tone of one who drops serious matters. " Is it May's ? Oh, how she has improved."

" She did it just the other day," he said, rising also rather abruptly to stand at her side. " The first day she sat up."

"Poor duck," said the tender mother. "One sees it is a little shaky, but there is a lot of spirit and life in it all the same. Is it a fancy head?"

"No," said Alexander. "It's the girl—the young lady—who nursed her those few days."

"Never! What an attractive face. I wanted to ask you about her, Alec. How did you manage to find such a jewel?"

"She is a Mademoiselle Morny," said Alexander. "A friend of mine—a student down there at the Sorbonne. I went to her for help, at my wit's end; and she was so good as to offer at once to come herself."

"Oh," said Mrs. Lampeter, letting go the portrait, and dropping her sunshade simultaneously. "Tell me where she lives. I must go and kiss her at once."

Alexander gave Gilberte's address; but Meysie's mother ran on unheeding.

"A friend of yours, you say? Not of May's? Really, it is wonderful!" Alexander at her side sat impassive, and Mrs. Lampeter leapt the emotional gap, according to her habit. "She must be one of the people with a passion for nursing," she said. "Her nice eyes look like it. A true passion."

"Perhaps she has," said Alexander.

"It was charming of you to keep the sketch," said Mrs. Lampeter, restoring it remorsefully to its upright position. "Naughty May will be

touched when I tell her. But I do think it particularly good." She gazed at Gilberte's face a moment longer. All remembrance of any object of requiting her services by payment had now passed from her mind. No statement of Alexander's was easy to dispute; she was not naturally suspicious; and, after all, was it not readily explicable that anybody with nice eyes like that should run to nurse her May when she was ill?

"When can I go and see her?" debated Mrs. Lampeter aloud, gathering up her parcels one by one with an absent hand.

"I think she has an examination or something on," said Alexander, showing some colour in his face as he bent to pick up her parasol. "I expect she is rather busy just at present."

"I will write," decided Mrs. Lampeter, her eyes still tenderly on her daughter's handiwork. "I will write and ask her to tea."

Having finally collected all her belongings, she came back from the stairhead to ask—

"What did you say was Miss Maurel—Miss Morny's address?"

She noticed then that the faithful lover was still standing where she had left him, by Meysie's shaky drawing.

XVIII

It was a beautiful day, one of the most stainlessly glorious of a fine month, and the date was the fourteenth of July. There was the hum of mirth and summer in the streets, and a pleasant breath of wind relieved the heat, and fluttered the pennons strung gracefully in every quarter of the boulevard. Paris, as hostess, was at her best, radiant and friendly; but, on that great day of the year, with a special indulgent eye to her own: and that inner hearth a people like a house may possess, where the eye of the merely curious should not penetrate.

Meysie's party had a task to keep her from over-exerting herself, for she declared that as it was her last chance, she must see everything. A national festival is not to be witnessed every day, and really it had never occurred to her before that the French were sufficiently of a nation to boast of one. It could only be the red republican "bit," anyhow, that cared about the taking of the Bastille. There were plenty of other sorts, because she had met them, however Alec might choose to lecture.

For all the vigorous and inconsequent argument she instituted, however, it was astonishing how many of these negligible republicans she met in the streets and the gardens; and they all, down to the youngest of them, seemed determined to celebrate, at whatever cost, the debatable action of their forefathers.

"It is rather nice, all the same," said Meysie, when she had at last been driven to rest on a seat near the Carpeaux fountain at the top of the avenue, and looked down all the gay vista between the dusty chestnut trees to the distant Senate in the sunshine. Meysie wore white to-day and looked her prettiest—only a shade of wistful regret in her clear eyes clouding the dear thought of England to-morrow, with all the things she loved there and had left so lightly.

"The children are perfect ducks, aren't they, Mollie? Look at that one with the bear on wheels. Do you see, walking behind the trees with his father?"

"Rather a young father," said Mrs. Lampeter. "There,—why, Alec knows him."

Alexander had risen and advanced to the "father" in question, who, strolling in the shadow of the trees opposite, was seen to raise his hat.

"Alec knows all kinds of people I don't," said Meysie discontentedly. "I can't think how he—oh, Mollie, if it isn't that man! I hope to goodness he has not seen me." She shrank

to her mother, the colour mounting to her face.

"Not Mr. Avery, dearest?" said her mother puzzled.

"How are you, Morny?" said Alexander. "Hullo, Jean; come over and see this lady, will you?"

Owing to this tactlessness, the general encounter became inevitable. Meysie drew herself up in absent haughtiness, Paul made a really beautiful bow, and his nephew kissed Mrs. Lampeter's hand with an affable promptitude that reduced that lady to laughter.

"Goodness, what a bear," said Mrs. Lampeter, leaning forward in instant sympathy. "Look there, Jean, he has dropped his flag."

"He strews his flags along the way," said Paul. "He carried four at starting, also a tricolor ribbon round his neck and waist. Had he possessed a tail, he would doubtless have had a tricolor round it also."

"Il a une belle queue," said Jean, regarding his bear from the front.

"Speak your English," ordained his uncle. "Address these ladies in their tongue; do you hear? It is to you to do the honours."

"Sais pas c' qu' j' leur dirai," said Jean frankly. Four simultaneous consonants came quite easily to Jean.

"Ask this young lady if she has made a good recovery."

Jean, having stared round-eyed at the vision of Meysie for a minute and a half, said suddenly, " How are you, meess ? "

" Remarkably well, sir, thank you," said Meysie. " What a perfect pet it is."

" Yess," agreed Jean, and stroked his bear with an air of patronage ; it was the only perfect pet he had in sight.

" We have to congratulate you, Morny, by the way," said Alexander.

" Oh," said Meysie, interested. " Are you engaged ? "

" Ah," ejaculated the young man. " Alas no, mademoiselle ; not accepted, but received."

" That means an examination, doesn't it ? " said Meysie to Alexander. " Well, I will congratulate him ; but I should like to know first, what for."

" Do not inquire," said Paul, with a melancholy air. " Mademoiselle's congratulations are too valuable to waste."

" That's the way to do it, Alec," Meysie informed him. " When we congratulate you at home, you only grunt."

" Success is too ordinary an occurrence to M. Fergusson," said Morny.

" Now then," Meysie invited Alexander. " He can't, you see," she excused him to Paul, " merely because it happens to be true."

" And your sister," said Alexander hastily ; " what's her luck ? "

Paul paused to save Mrs. Lampeter's sunshade, which the playful wind was assisting to escape while she bent above his nephew.

"My sister?" he said, still keeping his eyes turned away. "She is nowhere. She did not take her examination."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Meysie. "Is she ill?"

"No, mademoiselle; she has never been more capable."

"Then why on earth——"

"I believe," said Paul, "that her father forbade it." He renounced adroitly his share in Gilberte's father.

"Well, really!" said Meysie. "Mother, can you see me not taking an examination because father said I shouldn't?"

Mrs. Lampeter could not see Meysie. She was also fully occupied by talking, with intermittent growls, in the character of Jean's bear. Jean was a little surprised at her, but amused also. He decided he liked English ladies, of the soft-voiced variety.

Alexander, behind the seat, had turned unaccountably and extraordinarily white.

"I thought you said she was so awfully good," persisted Meysie, who felt a duty on the subject of daughters, excluding her from any consideration as to plunging into places where she was not desired. Paul gave her a single sharp glance.

" I met a professor of my sister's, mademoiselle," he said, " half an hour since in the gardens, who could not contain his lamentations. He said of all the students who attend his classes, Gilberte was the most accomplished and promising, without exception. It is true," Paul added suddenly, " that Maréchal is young."

" Well, why shouldn't he be ? " said Meysie.

" Professors should be old. They are the less open to prejudice. I mean, ladies' professors."

" I wonder you can joke about it," said Meysie.

" It is all I have left to do," said Paul. " Come, mon petit, they await us yonder." And making his bow rather brusquely to the party, he walked away with his charge.

" I believe," said Meysie, " he is ever so angry about it, really. His eyes looked like it. Does he hate his father, Alec ? "

" Meysie ! " cried her mother.

" I believe they have disputes," said Alexander, with caution. " Morny would be—well—high-spirited, to deal with."

" Is his sister low-spirited, then ? "

" Oh—no. I have heard his sister supports him."

" Really, I can't understand this idiotic country," said Meysie. " Her father couldn't force her, could he ? "

" You are very persistent, May," her mother laughed.

"Well, I cannot understand how any girl could—a clever girl, I mean. And she must be clever."

Alexander answered nothing, and soon made a move to go in. He suggested that Meysie must not tire herself out before the evening.

"We are going to drive this evening," said Meysie; but she obeyed him with noticeable docility. She ceased from talking or wrangling with him also, for as it happened, her mother's inquiring mind desired to be satisfied as to the organisation of the Faculty of Medicine, and she questioned Alexander all the way back to the garden exit as to state examination methods, a subject in which Meysie was not interested. They parted at the gate, having at parting Alexander's promise to meet them at nine for the evening drive; for Meysie had a childish predilection for fireworks, and intended to squeeze enjoyment out of her last day in Paris to the uttermost hour.

"I wish Alec himself looked better," sighed Mrs. Lampeter, as his tall, slightly stooping figure vanished up the street. "I really long to get him to the country, May, as much as you. I do not believe town life suits him at all."

"It's not the country he is pining for," said Meysie. "It's his dear old stuffy libraries at Oxford. Alec is, *essentially*, Mollie, a Don—a bachelor don," she added wickedly.

"What a pity we stand in his way," said Mrs.

Lampeter, with equal gaiety; "isn't it? Now we are going to be late for lunch, as usual."

"The clock is wrong," said Meysie languidly. "Clocks in Paris always are, more or less."

"The liberty of the individual clock, I suppose," said Mrs. Lampeter. "Never mind, Mlle. Pion will forgive us, the last day. Meysie, love, tell me," she added, as they moved slowly up the long, hot street, "what was the name of the young man with the little bear-boy?"

"Morny," said Meysie.

"Morny?" repeated her mother thoughtfully. "But, surely, that is the same name."

"As what, Mollie? Do be lucid."

"The name of the girl Alec mentioned: the girl who nursed you when you were ill."

Meysie jerked round.

"It's not the name you *said*," she cried. "You said Maurel."

"I expect I misremembered it," said Mrs. Lampeter in apology. "It was certainly Morny, now I think. Dear me, that may be why she never answered. I thought it a little odd, when I asked her to tea. If it missed her, what must she think of me!"

"But——" Meysie had stopped short, looking almost frightened. She was rapidly piecing her facts, old and new, and the resulting fabric was astonishing.

"What, dearest?"

"You heard what he said just now, the brother.

Those days—the days she stayed with me—could not have been her examination, could they?"

"Oh, mercy me!" cried Mrs. Lampeter, alarmed; then instantly added: "No, no, love, of course they were not. She must have told Alec if they were, don't you see? She knows him quite well."

There was a blank pause; they were slowly walking again.

"Or else," Mrs. Lampeter added, "her father had already put his foot down, which is quite likely. It comes to the same thing."

"Well," said Meysie, "if it comes to the same thing, I wish you wouldn't startle me so, Mollie."

"I am sorry, darling. It was only, I also had a sudden——"

There the conversation broke off abruptly, as such conversations do, when words are backed with busy thoughts, and seem to do little but mark time, until brain has caught up speech again. Mother and daughter moved on, and went in to lunch, without further intercourse or effort to penetrate a mysterious subject, which might abash them if taken too suddenly or too seriously. It was simply the habit of their order of mind, and in no sense precluded them severally from the most sensitive emotion.

After lunch, Meysie, driven by entreaty, underwent the outward form of an afternoon siesta. She did not attempt to sleep, however,

but lay on her straight white bed, where Gilberte had tended her through miserable feverish nights, and gazed gravely out of the window.

She looked a pretty baby so, with her hair rough and curly, and her flushed cheek on the slim supporting hand. Her eyes, slightly distended with the childish surprise, of which they always held the possibility, seemed to be making new discoveries in that now most familiar outlook of swaying branches, backed by ranks of city roof and chimney. Meysie had approved her high room, from which she could look down on Paris—her kingdom, her new possession, the stage which she had chosen on which to dance through an easy part.

Yet the part was not so simple, it seemed, after all. Her ideas of life and the world she ruled had had a shock—not the first shock, truly, during the seven months past, but by far the greatest and the most momentous. She had been gay and rather wild at lunch-time, acting up to her character as the " enfant terrible " of the demoiselles Pions' community; but now, there was no doubt, she would do well in sheer prudence and self-defence to think things out a little before she faced him—her " him," Alexander.

The name itself, the familiar name, struck a new chord in her mind. Even now, it must be mentioned, though intermittent visions brought by the mind-shock danced across her faculties—

even now she was incapable of going the whole way of frank admission; incapable chiefly for lack of observation of the characters that approached her, but also by that habit of turning sidelong to a possibly distasteful fact, which is the cowardly side of shyness.

Admitting that this girl, even as that other whom Meysie knew best, might have had a little passion, a passing enthusiasm, for Alexander, Meysie's own lover and exclusive possession; admitting her real sacrifice in his cause, which was also Meysie's; even so the admissions were preferable to an idea that Alexander, the strong and faithful, could have turned a serious thought in a stranger's direction. Meysie did not admit it honestly in so many words. She felt Alexander spring perforce in her own esteem as the object of another woman's admiration; but in proportion as he sprang she clung to him, claimed him eagerly as nothing if not hers. Had she not reason to assume him? Had he ever, at one point, been less than good and gentle to her? Had he ever shown to her eyes a sign of wavering faith? The idea was incredible, intolerable—and so it was not fact.

She let fact drop, as her eyelids half sank under the soothing spell of the wind-stirred branches she watched. But, as it dropped, imagination sprang awake—and proved no better friend. The shock had moved things there as well, had dislocated the array of her chosen garden

of fancies. Her very love of drama, of "situation," spoke loud for what the girl—the other girl—had done. That pictorial inner vision, which she had trained from childhood for her own purposes, could not now be checked. Faces, tones, the crowd of small evidence she had neglected at the time, came back upon her. The later chapters of Meysie's inner history began to be retold with astonishing speed and fluency; only, for once, the point of view was shifted, and the customary heroine slightly ousted from her place. Other heroines might exist, after all, in other histories as thrilling, true, and pitiful as hers. Nay, they might cross the line; her own was not exempt from their intrusion. She stood not alone in her neatly ringed sphere of happiness, as she had formerly thought. From the great tangled whirl of things she watched from afar with innocent amusement or pleasant emotion, a loop had caught her, and she was in the toil. She, the favoured, the onlooker, had herself to struggle with new discoveries; such as make woman's experience a living thing, merciless no doubt to the child's Elysium, but fruitful of wisdom for the ages.

It was not much at present, to be sure, this high-sounding discovery. Revelation is rare, after all; truth's gold at the best lies in muddy ore, only to be painfully or partially won. Subtle minds can strain at it lifelong, and Meysie's mind

was neither very subtle nor very patient—as yet. It would suffice to say, as she lay curled on her white bed in her high room, that she was making some little attempt—hesitating enough, being so new—to pursue other lives from the inside, as she had hitherto pursued her own.

XIX

THE motor-carriage which Alexander had taken care to charter in advance arrived at the house punctually at nine, and the pensionnaires who occupied the various floors of the tall building craned their necks jealously at window and balcony-edge to see the party start; for only English aristocrats could treat themselves to driving on such a night as this. It was radiantly fine and starry, inviting all abroad, and the pavements were full of a gently pressing throng, edging for the greater part in the direction of the " grands boulevards " and the quays.

" We want another," said Meysie discontentedly, as Alexander faced them in the vehicle, and, shutting the door, accommodated his long legs to theirs.

" I dare say we shall pick one up on the boulevard," he said with a smile.

" Is it like the Carnival ? " said Meysie, interested. " Will they have masks, and climb in ? "

" I won't answer for what will happen," said Alexander. " Hap your throat now, Meysie."

"I shall not hap my throat," she retorted. "He always uses those words for your benefit, Mollie. He simply daren't with me."

"Wrap it up all the same, darling," said Mrs. Lampeter.

"But it's almost too hot to breathe," the girl protested. "I do believe it will thunder."

She looked up at the velvet, impenetrable sky, pricked here and there with stars. The zenith was clear, but the lower reaches were curtained with indistinguishable fog, or cloud, or city smoke. Nothing more imminent, however, than a few flashes of summer lightning competed, in celestial space, with the innumerable earthly stars below. For all but the rare inquiring eye it was not a sky at all, merely a background of dark mysterious blue for the glow of saffron gold that hung above the festal town that night.

"Oh, we must stop; we must stop and see them dancing," said Meysie, charmed beyond measure at the gaily lighted throng in the broad spaces facing the Panthéon. "There are two old charwomen dancing together, Mollie, and two little boys. How can that woman waltz so well upon the pavement?"

"Parisians can waltz anywhere," said Mrs. Lampeter, leaning, too, to watch the lively scene. "What clever short frocks those two girls have, May; made at home I am sure—they must be milliners' apprentices. There, the other one is dancing now. She is just as graceful as her

sister. Look at her pretty little feet. The music is tempting too," she added, "though I prefer one band at once."

"Oh, oh, I wish I wasn't respectable," cried the impetuous young person beside her. "Why shouldn't everybody dance when nobody can see anybody? Alec, let go my frock. Those girls down there are students, anyhow, I know they are. Well, I'm a student, aren't I, Mollie? There, look at those men, they are gentlemen. French ones of course, but still—— There's Mr. Morny, I told you so! I am sure he can dance like an angel. Oh, Mr. Morny, darling, dance with me."

"Meysie!" ejaculated her outraged mother. "Providentially he can't hear you. Sit down before you quite disgrace us. Not to mention that it is not the gentleman at all."

"It was," said Meysie. "I am sure I saw him. He was with several other people, going along that side. Didn't you see Mr. Morny, Alec?"

"No," said Alexander. But he had seen another face for one minute beneath the shifting lights; a face in a little cream silk shawl, clasped to the throat with one brown hand. It had melted again in the shadows and the crowd; but he had known it, and one clenched hand held it near his heart in the darkness.

The carriage moved on, but the driver had to stop again many times. He was chartered for

two hours, so he was in no hurry, and showed himself indulgent to the caprices of little Meess behind. He was even amicable, practised his English on Alexander, signalled to friends in the crowd, and—when waiting became too dreary, even for his long-suffering temper—lit a cigarette to beguile the time.

"I know what I want," said Meysie, when she had grown a little tired of miracles in coloured fire, half seen through the crowds on the quays. "I want to go to Montmartre, right up to the Basilique. The lights from up there would be perfectly lovely, and you could see all the sets of fireworks going together, without these teasing, vulgar people." The charming crowd, it may be seen, had slightly changed its character, in the course of an hour's experience of it at close quarters.

"Wouldn't it be jolly, Alec," she pressed. "Do tell him to go."

"I misdoubt it's too misty to get a good sight," said Alexander. "Montmartre is pretty far out, remember."

"I wish to go," said Miss Lampeter, leaning back like a queen. "You have still a whole hour to amuse me, and I am feeling dull."

"The question is, if an hour is enough? We can hardly get over the nearer bridges. Can you get to Montmartre," he addressed the smoking chauffeur, "to the Sacré Cœur?"

The chauffeur shrugged and agreed. His

clients were, as he had now the clearest evidence, demented; but he was ready to serve them, even if their lunacy should lead them far from the highly coloured jollity that his superior taste approved. They were English, after all, and much is forgiven the English—since they pay well.

"Jolly!" said Meysie, radiant again, as they whirred away by small streets, manœuvred patiently across the river, and made their way by an ingenious circuit that puzzled even Alexander in the direction of the northern suburb. The driver, still humouring them, and aware of the need for hurry, could nevertheless not avoid giving himself and his clients a last taste of the crowd as they crossed the line of the great boulevards. He was far from objecting to the necessity, it seemed, since it gave him a chance both to show off his driving, and to exchange samples of Parisian wit with citizens who leapt hastily from under his wheels. A jerk of the thumb backwards appeared in every case to be sufficient explanation of his presence on the scene, and of such uncalled-for disturbance of easy-going pleasure-seekers. A similar jerk of his thumb to heaven was answer to the most popular of many questions addressed to him as to where he was bound. The chauffeur was evidently a wit in his degree, and room was made for the party with great good-humour.

"Lord knows if we shall ever get across,"

said Alexander, who was rather nervous when not on his own feet, as Meysie had several times pointed out to him.

"How dreadful if we killed a baby," said Mrs. Lampeter, whose covetous eyes followed every party of children they met. "Though it would teach the mothers not to keep them out so late," she added. "See that tiny one down there, dragged about by a great family who should know better; and the mother flirting disgracefully behind, and doesn't care a straw for it."

"Where?" said Meysie, suddenly interested.

"There, with her husband, and her funny little father, and her nice little boy. Oh, why——" she added suddenly, "it is the little bear-boy, as I live."

They had edged cautiously across the wide street into a less crowded part, and were turning slowly up the hill towards Montmartre. One family, one of the many, had stopped to part at the same corner, its members thrown into prominence by the lights of a café near at hand. It was a family of four, as Mrs. Lampeter described, rather oddly assorted: a stout, frowning, fussy little man, holding on to a minute boy skipping with excitement, and a pair of young people as alert and graceful as any to be seen beneath the stars that night—the girl almost lying on the young man's arm, and both quarrelling vigorously.

Meysie Lampeter held her breath. She stole, under the perplexing cross-lights, a glance at Alexander. He might have been as white as death, or he might have been as usual, it was so hard to know under the whiter glare of electricity reaching them from the corner shop. In any case his lips were shut in their grimmest line, and he was gazing like a statue in that direction.

Then she looked where he did. No, there was not a doubt of it. That was the face she had last seen by her bed, with an expression how different upon it then; serious, disdainful almost in its proud patience that girl's face had been, while this was perfect in carelessness and mirth. Yet it was she—the disturbing other "she" who had pushed upon her story—all her new-born instincts told her.

"I am not going to be silly," the girl schooled herself with an effort as mighty as any she had ever made, "or suspicious, I am just going to be Fair. This pays me out, and it's meant to do so. I had mine, and worried his life out, now he shall have his chance, as he deserves. If I didn't trust him now—I ought to be trampled to death in that crowd."

"Isn't she lovely?" she said, just under her breath. "Is that Miss Morny? Alec, darling, make her come here."

Alexander did not stir; but movement was unnecessary, for Gilberte had seen them. She

turned serious instantly, and straightening herself, gathered up her shawl, and seemed to make an attempt to pull her brother away.

"Mr. Morny," called Meysie in her most seductive tones, leaning from the carriage towards him. "Last time I saw you over in the 'Boule-Miche' I asked you to dance, and you never answered, and cut me dead."

"My sins have found me out," said Paul, gazing melodramatically about him. He was plainly in his maddest mood. "Tais-toi, Gilberte, for an angel speaks."

"You have been dancing," said Meysie. "Confess."

"I have but a sister," said Paul, "which is not inspiring, especially when she does nothing but call you names."

"Psst!" said Gilberte, who now looked most demure. She made a kind of little doubtful bow to the two she knew in the carriage, and slid her eyes aside. She moved no nearer to them than the merest formality demanded; the crowd, persistent, good-natured, pressing past and to all sides of them, gave the two parties a certain excuse for independence.

"The little boy looks tired," said Mrs. Lampeter's pleasant clear voice. "Which way is he going, I wonder?"

"They are going back, madame," said Paul, straightening his features to more conventional seemliness, and advancing alone. "My brother-

in-law takes the little one home to bed at his aunt's command. Hey, André ? "

" It is so," said the stout little man, wiping his brow. " Truly there is no profit in following madcaps further." He looked upon his young relatives, seemingly rather aggrieved. " Jean, bid good-night to these ladies, and your aunt and uncle."

" There is an end," said Gilberte, bending her head low to his little arms, " even to the Quatorze Juillet, at five years old. Go, little sleepy one, and dream well. Au revoir, André."

The pair made off ; passing her, André muttered something swiftly, and her eyelashes sank. She swung as though in annoyance, to her brother, who had come back to her from the carriage, where he had making a series of proper and elegant adieux, and, pulling him into the shadow, instantly began wrangling again.

" It is absurd," she said. " After ten now, and you with your work to-morrow, all this way from home. Have I not walked it a thousand times ? "

" With that white affair on your head, hein ? You are a walking signal to the apaches. Do not be a little fool, Gilberte." He spoke almost sharply.

She snatched her little shawl off boldly, and hid it under the cloak she carried.

" There," she said. " My dress is plain, see. I am a working-girl simply. I would wear the

cloak, which makes me into a grandmama, were not the heat so stifling. Are you satisfied ? "

" No," he returned. " I see you in person to the door, or you don't go to Montmartre at all."

" I have no other home now, my dear." She laughed recklessly, and pulled herself away. " I promised her to go, also, as you know very well. Good-night."

He caught her, and they struggled, moving, however, owing to his greater force, up the side street on which she had entered. They paid no further heed to the motor-carriage, which, freeing itself at last from encumbrances, was pushing slowly in their wake.

" It has lasted over-long, thy independence," they heard the young man say, and then her breathless, " Go, Paul, or I shall cry."

" Montmartre, did he say ? " Meysie had turned to Alexander. " Is that where she is going ? But we must take her, of course."

" Who is the lady ? " said Mrs. Lampeter, assuming prudence. She had followed neither Meysie's low-toned remarks to Alexander, nor Paul's voluble chatter to them both ; and, rather surprised at Gilberte's freedom with her companion, she could not quite sympathise with Meysie's eagerness.

" Mollie, it's his sister—who nursed me before you came. Of course we must have her."

" Of course we must," said her mother in a different tone. " Alec, stop the man."

The patient chauffeur, drawing alongside the couple on the pavement, stopped anew. Alexander, seeming suddenly to awaken to his duty, dismounted and approached them.

"Morny!" he said, and Gilberte swung round at his voice. "We have a seat here. Will your sister take it?"

"Ah, thank you," she said, quickly dissenting. "I am going home."

"We are going to Montmartre," said Alexander.

"*You*," said Morny, utterly amazed. "But why?"

"To see the fireworks on the river," said Alexander, with the calmness of one reconciled to a crazy statement. "We are going to the Basilique."

"You will never get there," said brother and sister together. "Have you any idea"—Gilberte turned to address the chauffeur—"how steep it is?"

"To be sure, mademoiselle," said that philosophic being. "There is no way to heaven that is not steep."

"And if you run backwards?" said Paul, with an air of detached interest, and a professional eye to the car. "Truly, I think, ma petite, you will be safer with me."

"If we die," said Meysie's clear high voice, "we all die together. Miss Morny, will you come here this minute and be introduced to my mother?"

Gilberte, with a curious last pleading look to her brother, went.

"It is that we live nowhere near the Basilique," she began carefully in English, her startled eyes on Mrs. Lampeter's face.

"Just get in," said Meysie calmly. "Mother has been wanting to kiss you for ages. You shall just come up to the top with us, and then you may go home. Now, Alec, and don't tread on us more than you can help. That's right. Oh, M. Morny"—she turned, smiling, to Paul, who stood with his mouth slightly open on the causeway—"aren't you coming?"

"Mon Dieu," began Paul.

"There *might* be a place for you in front," Meysie interrupted, "if you were clever."

"I am clever, mademoiselle," said Paul, "therefore I decline it." He paused, and his sister's pleading glance found him again. "I follow," he said, nodding to her. "If I find you on the hill, I push behind. If I find you on the top, I thank the saints. What knowledge I possess of surgery," they heard him saying as they slid away, "I trust will not be called for."

XX

THE charioteer sufficed, and the petrol held good. What wings were needed to that dreamlike flight beneath the stars did not fail them; and all the way she sat, warm and real, pressed close to his side on the narrow seat.

She was very still, and silent almost. Mrs. Lampeter, her benevolent mind edging as ever aside from embarrassing improbabilities, was puzzled by the weight of the stranger's presence upon them. She could barely believe it was the same girl who had been mocking and laughing under her eyes a few minutes before. It was her other incarnation perhaps, she consoled herself; the same that had stood by her daughter in her need, through those feverish nights and days. Her heart went out to Gilberte; but her real gratitude and new embarrassment almost choked her, and the words she found seemed to her poor and vague.

She did put out her hand impulsively, and grasp the girl's strong fingers. But Gilberte, after letting her hand lie gently for a moment or two, removed it as quietly, as though for the

purpose of throwing her little shawl about her shoulders; for, as they mounted the narrow twisting streets of the hill, the heavy air grew perceptibly fresher, and in the short flights of the car on flatter ground, became a wind. It blew Gilberte's hair about, and she settled the folds of silk to cover it with an absent hand.

"Lightning," she said as she did so. "I fear the weather is breaking." Her low voice in the spaces of the night sent a thrill through Fergusson, and close pressed as they were, the little movement passed to her.

"Are you afraid of it?" said Meysie's mother; for the momentary glare had lit her face, and her eyes were still startled—liquid and gleaming like those of an animal of the woods.

"My mother dislikes it," said Gilberte. "Our house stands high."

"Where do you live?" said Meysie.

"We have passed the street," she answered absently.

"She is very reserved," thought Mrs. Lampeter. "I suppose she thinks this an improper proceeding. One never can tell, in this incredible town."

"Good," said Meysie, as though echoing her thought. "You have thrown in your lot with us."

The girl did not laugh, or answer. The whole party fell silent as though irresistibly, during the last breathless tug to the top; skirting round the great temple, whose dome, pearly white by

day, stood grim and black against the starry sky. The chauffeur drew up on the level, to the rear of the church, with a grunt of triumph, and folding his arms, looked round upon them as though to say, " It is done, good people. And now, what have you gained ? "

They had gained a fairy city of coloured lights, spread fan-shape at their feet, for only a wedge as it were was visible from where they stood. Here and there a wide glare showed a Place, or a stack of darker roofs a station. Fitfully, and as it seemed very far away, for the mist was gathering fast as the night grew old, the rockets pierced with thin threads the murky air, and parted into " stars two and three," with a sound like the puff of a faint sigh. Nearer at hand the deserted houses of the suburb looked asleep, and the little party felt a singular estrangement, cut off and far removed on their watchtower from the homely rejoicing below.

Mrs. Lampeter took a long breath of the keen fresh air.

" What a height it is," she said, really surprised.

" It is our camp," said Gilberte, a ring in her low voice. " Mont-martre, the hill of strife. Hein ? " She appealed—to the darkness.

" Of martyrdom," said Alexander, between his set teeth.

" I think not," she said, rising to her feet. " That is for you English, martyrdom ; for us

others, strife is best." After a minute of wordless gazing abroad, she herself broke the silence. "The view is more beautiful from the front," she said, almost with impatience. "Mademoiselle will not dismount?"

"There are steps, aren't there?" said Meysie, who, amid the emotion that affected all, had kept singularly clear and cool. "Alec, you go with them; I shall be all right. Oh," she added, without pausing, "Mr. Morny, you *have* been quick. I thought you were an apache at least, jumping out upon us from that direction. Now then, look—isn't it worth while?"

Paul had reached the summit where the party stood by a short-cut, for he knew the quarter where he had been born and bred very well. He waved a hand merely, to signify he could not speak, and sank, breathing short with his rapid climb, upon the nearest resting-place, which happened to be a step in the terrace wall, close to the carriage.

His sudden appearance on the scene clinched the division of the party. Mrs. Lampeter's adventurous spirit was yearning to explore; but even mothers of eight-and-forty have their duties, and she saw hers too well. Paul Morny was an extremely questionable, insinuating, flirtatious Frenchman. Meysie, her daughter, although of course an engaged young woman, was still of an irresponsible age, and always more daring in the dark. Perceiving him settle beside

her and gather his breath for a chatter, Mrs. Lampeter, with a slight sigh of ambition frustrated, settled too, and stayed at her post in the carriage.

So Gilberte and Alexander went alone.

There was no doubt it was more beautiful from the front.

The terrace on the forepart of the hill was round the corner from the driving road, and, at this hour of the night, quite deserted. Even the merry voices from the carriage could not reach them. They were cut off, as it were, from all that lay behind, and all in front. There was nothing anywhere at all, in Paris or the world, but themselves.

It was a great loneliness that fell upon them both; the terror of the void on the verge of which they stood; the terror of the future, of near separation above all. She clenched both her little fists in the thin shawl up to her throat, and shut her eyes, swaying slightly as she stood. He moved to her on instinct, as though fearing she would fall.

"Of course," she said, when the need of speech grew intolerable, with all the tone she could muster, "a woman cannot look over the edge, and not want to spring."

"It seems unfair," he said in a voice as strained, "to drive us to bay like this. This night is unfair altogether. I have been thinking that."

"I knew you were thinking it," she said. "Only it is right, nevertheless. We have to know how we stand."

She shivered, and he saw it.

"You are cold," he said in indignation, and drew her closely up to his heart. "We cannot do it," he muttered as he did so. "What is the use of pretending?"

"It is I," said Gilberte. "You can."

"Are you so sure?"

"Yes, sure," she said.

"Look up at me," said Alexander.

She looked; and the shawl dropped from her hair, warm from its contact, and clinging to his hand.

"I am in your debt," he said. "I am in your hands. What shall I do for you?"

"There is no debt," she answered steadily, "and you know it, sir. Act for me as yourself, for we are of one mind."

"You can be so sure then how I shall act?"

"I think I can."

She saw the steadfast look above her change to faint amusement, as at the dear folly of a child.

"You have worked it out by the books?" he said. "Very well." And while her eyes reflected the stars, he bent and kissed her on the forehead and the lips.

After the pause, Gilberte drew back from him with a short breath like a sob.

"You will have to do penance for that," she said, when she could speak.

He laughed—the laugh he used so rarely. "Oh, I'll do penance," he said, "down all the years and centuries, till we meet again."

"Will it take as long as that?"

"Quite as long," he answered, "for French and English to meet."

"But French and English," she murmured, "are I and you."

"Not yet," said Alexander, turning grave. "There are others." Gilberte also knew of others, and bowed her head.

"You have broken your vows, you know," she said presently, looking up at him as he stood above her in the strange reflected light.

"What vows, my dear?"

"One woman only——" she murmured the knight's code from the poem she had studied. "Do you not know, monsieur, how I have always thought of you? Arthur — the preux — the prig—he would never have done it. Why did you?"

"Because he's a young man in a book," said Alexander strenuously, "and I am just myself."

"Yes, that is it," said Gilberte, leaning to his arm again. "Of all those great gentlemen in your history, each, one by one, was only just himself. You are the newest one, mine." She laughed softly. "The present day," she mur-

mured. "Oh, if I had been there to write about you for Maréchal."

"Monsieur Maréchal would not have been pleased," said Alexander.

He had never felt such a flow of life before; her vivid sustaining presence seemed to set his nature free, to illuminate the dark and toilsome way he had been climbing. He was sharing every thought with her, as she stood up to his side, both spoken thought and silent, free and forbidden. It was the "bargain driven" of the last poet-knights—she was the friend of his heart. They stood at the very point, to their own exalted mood, where the ideals of two great races meet: she bound by the fine tradition of family piety, he by that of chivalry and his spoken word.

"That is all nonsense about Maréchal," Gilberte assured him seriously. "I have seen the girl he is to marry. And this of ours," she added, watching the flashing lights upon the distant quays, "is a dream. For in three minutes—my Paul will give me three, I think—it is good-bye, and we go back to them, and we all wake up again. Say, my knight, we are not asleep, are we?"

"Wide awake," he said. "That is the beauty of it. We stand here on our four feet—by the way, my dear, I hope yours are not cold—and hold each other's hand."

"Not cold yet," laughed Gilberte. Indeed

the springing triumph, glowing in her, kept her warm.

They stood so, hand in hand like children, watching the distant rockets, fewer now, like the sparks of a dying fire—for a minute or two more. Then she caught his other hand.

"Good-bye," she said. "The real one, eh? Below, in an instant or two, we shall be grimacing. I am so good at that—you will see. Come along."

And flinging his hands away from her, she gathered up her little silken shawl, which had nearly fallen off her, and went swiftly before him down the terrace towards the road.

Meysie was suddenly tired, and her mother anxious about her, so the leavetaking was hasty and formal when it came. After parting, brother and sister took the short-cut down the steps to the street below. About half-way down, having afforded a glance or two to his companion's face, the young man stopped suddenly.

"You are sure there is nothing in his conduct, ma sœur, of which one could in honour complain?" he suggested, his mobile face set in solemn anxiety.

"There is nothing," said Gilberte.

"Good," said Paul, proceeding: only, he did not look as if he thought so.

Something, he felt sure, needed to be done to the man who could stain her face with tears like

that. It took much to do so, with Gilberte; he was a brother, and had teased her from twelve years old to twenty, so he should know. There was an unfinished feeling, to his mind, about the part he had personally played that evening. The curtain had not fallen as he could have wished on their scene: Paul was young enough in life to expect it to fall effectively. Some one in the caste had "raté"—he trusted not himself. Of the little heroine by him he had no doubts; but he followed her rapid flight down the steps under protest, as it were, stealing more than one glance back towards the carriage, still purring above them on the summit of the hill. He followed tamely, but he felt supremely discontented, and a little puzzled too.

"You know," he ventured presently, with a frown, "Fergusson is a good fellow, as English fellows go; but he is not a man to marry—for any but a leetle meess."

"Possibly not," said Gilberte, laughing through her tears, and ran her fingers through his arm. "Now tell me all about Ania," she suggested, drawing up to him confidingly as they reached the road.

So they conversed very comfortably about Paul's affairs during the remainder of the short way home. Yet on the doorstep she kissed and thanked him so sweetly that he became discontented again.

"One expects you?" he said, lingering.

She signalled mutely to the little light above. Paul the truant knew that little light of old, and his face softened with hers.

"You will be scolded, little one," he laughed. "And my father, hey?"

His sister shrugged. "My late docility still affects him. Girls, seest thou, are always docile in the end."

"You submit then?" He approved her with a nod. "And the future, ma petite?" he asked, with far greater diffidence.

She only laughed, made a little face at him, a little gesture, and turned in.

For the future, the look and movement said, there was always André—and Jean.

THE END.

Printed by Morrison & Gibb Limited, *Edinburgh*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

PROMISE

BY

E. SIDGWICK.

Crown 8vo, 6s. *Second Impression.*

"For a first novel 'Promise' is exceptionally able—one that should have notable successors."—*Nation.*

"The anxiety felt by the experienced reader as to whether a book that opens so well will continue on the same level soon merges into the rare enjoyment that is consequent on a growing belief in the writer's grasp not only of her subject, but of her medium. . . . One of the most remarkable novels of recent years."—*Westminster Gazette.*

"The thing is admirably done, if only because of its delicate implications. An atmosphere is suggested, and successfully. . . . It is delicate, exceedingly interesting work."—*Observer.*

"She appears to us to possess that true imaginative gift, as distinguished from the mere power of vivid reporting, which is the necessary qualification for continuing to produce work of permanent value in fiction."—*Times.*

"We are left to hope that the life of this English Jean Christophe will continue through at least another volume, filled with people as variegated and attractive as those to whom we are introduced in this."—*Spectator.*

BY E. M. FORSTER.

THE CELESTIAL OMNIBUS, and Other Stories.

By E. M. FORSTER, Author of "Howard's End," "A Room with a View," etc. With decorations by ROGER FRY. Imperial 16mo, 3s. 6d. net. [*March* 1911.

Mr. E. M. Forster is the author of four remarkable novels, of which the last, "Howard's End," has been crowned as the great novel of 1910. These fantasies show his genius from another point of view, and the decorations by Mr. Roger Fry are in entire harmony with the delicacy and humorous imagination of the author's work.

FICTION

NOVELS BY NEW WRITERS

"Yet another first novel from a firm which is establishing a reputation for insight into the value of works sent for their consideration."—*Manchester Guardian.*

THE LEADING NOTE. By ROSALIND MURRAY. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

"It is the strength and promise of Miss Rosalind Murray's book that she has kept resolute hold of both these ardent and impulsive . . . temperaments; that she has refused to allow sentiment to lead her astray; and that she finally leaves the reader . . . face to face with a really significant outlook on life."—*Times.*

"It is clear that she has the inborn instinct for restraint, balance, grace—the instinct which distinguishes the rare craftsman."—*Nation.*

PEACE ALLEY. By DIANA MEYRICK. Crown 8vo, 6s.

"Here is the chronicle of a village written in the spirit and with much of the humorous satire of 'Cranford.'"—*Daily Mail.*

"The author of this study of village life is to be congratulated on a book of high promise. Humour, a sense of character, and a power of epigrammatic expression are conspicuous among its qualities."—*Athenæum.*

"A book of quite exceptional ability, though it is quietly told, with no straining after effect and no brilliant word-painting. Its pervading quality is charm."—*Morning Post.*

THE STORY OF ROSALIND. Retold from her Diary. By MONICA MOORE. Square 8vo, cloth, 3s. net; in paper wrappers, 2s. 6d. net.

"We trust that a large public will ask for this book . . . published at less than half the usual price of a novel. It is a beautiful study of personality, the central figure, as maid, wife, and mother, revealing the difficulty experienced in shaping an extraordinary vitality to the service of common life and subordinating the passions."—*Athenæum.*

"A moving and sincere little story which augurs well for the powers of its author."—*Times.*

THE EARLY HISTORY OF JACOB STAHL. By J. D. BERESFORD. Crown 8vo, 6s.

[*February* 1911.

The hero, a youth accidently lamed in childhood, is brought up in the country by an aunt and trained as an architect. He goes to London alone, and the trials and temptations of his adolescence and the story of his unfortunate marriage, serve to show the stuff of which he is made.

DRAMA

THE MADRAS HOUSE. A Comedy in Four Acts. By GRANVILLE BARKER. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. net; paper, 1s. 6d. net. [*Second Impression.*

"You can read 'The Madras House' at your leisure, dip into it here and there, turn a titbit over lovingly on the palate, patiently collate passage with passage for greater clearness, stop to muse over this or that suggestion—and the result is, in our experience, a round of pleasure. . . . Mr. Barker has an extraordinarily vivid sense of reality. He has that unmistakable mark of the realist, the desire to get his inanimate things, his very chairs and tables, as 'right' as his personages. . . . 'The Madras House' . . . is so good in print that everybody should make a mental note to read it."—*Times.*

ANATOL: A Sequence of Dialogues. By ARTHUR SCHNITZLER. Paraphrased for the English Stage by GRANVILLE BARKER. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. net; paper wrappers, 1s. 6d. net. [*February* 1911.

CHAINS. A Play in Four Acts. By ELIZABETH BAKER. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d. net; paper wrappers, 1s. net.

"It is just the sort of play that one likes to buy and read, for it is real and alive, and a play full of ideas."—*Daily Mail.*

THE WAY THE MONEY GOES. A Play in Three Acts. By LADY BELL. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d. net; paper wrappers, 1s. net.

"A comedy that acted very well, and perhaps reads even better than it acts. . . . There should be many readers for a work so rich in humour and pathos."—*Westminster Gazette.*

DRAMA—*continued*

THREE PLAYS BY GRANVILLE BARKER: *The Marrying of Anne Leete*, *The Voysey Inheritance*, and *Waste*. In one Vol., 5s. net; singly, cloth, 2s. net; paper wrappers, 1s. 6d. net. [*Third Impression.*

Special Edition, on hand-made paper, limited to 50 numbered copies, *signed by the author*, extra bound in three volumes, in a case, £1, 1s. net per set.

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT. A Play in Three Acts. By JOHN MASEFIELD, Author of "The Tragedy of Nan," "Multitude and Solitude," etc. etc. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d. net. [*Second Impression.*

PAINS AND PENALTIES: The Defence of Queen Caroline. A Play in Four Acts. By LAURENCE HOUSMAN. [*In the Press.*

PRUNELLA: Or, Love in a Dutch Garden. By LAURENCE HOUSMAN and GRANVILLE BARKER. Pott 4to, 3s. 6d. net. Theatre Edition, crown 8vo, wrappers, 1s. net.

THE CHINESE LANTERN. A Play in Three Acts. By LAURENCE HOUSMAN. Pott 4to, 3s. 6d. net.

FICTION

GEORGE GISSING'S NOVELS—

The Whirlpool.	**Eve's Ransom.**
The Unclassed.	**In the Year of Jubilee.**
The Odd Women.	**Denzil Quarrier.**
The Emancipated.	**Human Odds and Ends.**

Library Edition, crown 8vo, cloth extra, 6s. each.
New re-issue, crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. net each.

THE GREEN CLOAK. By YORKE DAVIS. Crown 8vo, illustrated, 6s. Also Cheap Edition, 1s. net.

"Not in anything we have read lately, except the 'Mystery in the Yellow Room,' is the interest so splendidly maintained. . . . A very exciting book."—*Manchester Guardian.*

"A most ingenious tale."—*Times.*

THE HANDSOME QUAKER, and Other Stories. By KATHARINE TYNAN. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

GENERAL

FAMOUS IMPOSTORS. By BRAM STOKER, Author of "Dracula," "Henry Irving." With 10 Portraits. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

Impostors of Royalty—Cagliostro—The Wandering Jew—John Law—Witches—Arthur Orton, the Tichborne Claimant—Women as Men—Hoaxes—The Chevalier D'Eon—The Bisley Boy, etc. etc.

Mr. Bram Stoker's ready gift for a narrative of mystery and crime renders him an ideal historian of the forgotten enigmas of life. The climax of the book is the story of the "Bisley Boy," which hints at an extraordinary imposture, hitherto unsuspected, affecting the identity of one of the most famous monarchs in modern history.

RED-LETTER DAYS OF SAMUEL PEPYS. Edited by E. F. ALLEN, with an Introduction by H. B. WHEATLEY. With 5 Portraits. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d. net.

"Mr. Allen has extracted from the famous Diary a selection of entertaining passages touching on Mr. Pepys's idiosyncrasies, his wife and servants, his amusements, dress and religion, his superstitions, and much else that was his, adding to them his entries on the Great Fire and Plague, and other important events of his day. With Mr. Wheatley's brilliant little preface and some half-dozen portraits, this makes a capital introduction to the Diary, and contains a good deal of the best and most interesting reading that is to be found there."—*Bookman*.

SAILING SHIPS: The Story of their Development from the Earliest Times to the Present Day. By E. KEBLE CHATTERTON. With a Colour Frontispiece by CHARLES DIXON, and over 130 Illustrations. Designed cover, in cloth gilt, 16s. net.

STEAM-SHIPS: The Story of their Development. By R. A. FLETCHER. With a Colour Frontispiece by CHARLES DIXON, and over 100 line and half-tone Illustrations. Extra royal 8vo, designed cover, cloth gilt, 16s. net.

SELECTED TALES OF MYSTERY. By EDGAR ALLAN POE. With 16 Illustrations in Colour by BYAM SHAW. Extra royal 8vo, in cover designed by the artist, gilt top, 12s. 6d. net. Cheaper re-issue, with 12 Illustrations. Large 4to, 7s. 6d. net.

DOWN CHANNEL IN THE "VIVETTE." By E. KEBLE CHATTERTON. With a Coloured Frontispiece and 50 drawings by NORMAN S. CARR. Square 8vo, decorated covers, 10s. 6d. net.

"A really interesting and beautifully produced log."—*Yachting Monthly.*

PROSPECTUS ON APPLICATION.

MODERN JOURNALISM: A Practical Guide for Beginners. By a London Editor. With a Preface by GEORGE R. SIMS. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net; paper wrappers, 1s. net.

"Two hundred pages of guidance for the beginner are cheap at half a crown, from one who knows his subject as the author does."—*Evening News.*

HOW TO TEACH NATURE STUDY. By THOMAS W. HOARE. Author of the "Look About You" Nature Books. Illustrated. 3s. 6d. net.

"We have not space to declare one-tenth of the treasures there are for the teacher and for the student in this volume."—*Daily News.*

HOUSEHOLD FOES. By ALICE RAVENHILL. Author of "Practical Hygiene," etc. With 60 Illustrations by AGNES M. KELLEY. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d.

"One of the best health books for boys and girls which has yet appeared."
Aberdeen Free Press.

ESSAYS IN TWO MODERNS: Euripides; Samuel Butler. By W. H. SALTER, M.A. Demy 8vo, 3s. 6d. net. [*February* 1911.

TENNYSON: A Lecture by Arthur Sidgwick, M.A. With a Frontispiece of the Statue of Tennyson by HAMO THORNYCROFT, R.A. Demy 8vo, wrappers, 1s. net.

LETTERS OF JAMES BOSWELL TO THE REV. W. J. TEMPLE. With an Introduction by THOMAS SECCOMBE, and 3 Portraits. Demy 8vo, 7s. 6d. net.

EARLY ENGLISH LYRICS: AMOROUS, DIVINE, MORAL AND TRIVIAL. Chosen by E. K. CHAMBERS and F. SIDGWICK. Fcap. 8vo, 6s. net.

BINDING SECT. DEC 20 1972

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PR
6037
I35G4

Sidgwick, Ethel
Le gentleman